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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE

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SIX

Discourses, or Sermons,

AS INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT.

Στύλος και ἑδραίωμα της ἀληθειας, και ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶ τὸ της ἐυσεβείας μυστηριον· Θεὸς ἐφανερωθη ἐν σαρκὶ—

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PREFACE.

The following Discourses were drawn up about twelve months since, when I expected a speedy opportunity of delivering them from the pulpit. As the views I then had are now over-ruled, I take this method of laying them before the public; that those who have thought proper to foretell the part I would have acted, and the doctrine I would have taught, if my desires had taken place, may be either satisfied or silenced.

Yet I should not have thought it worth my while, to give either myself or others this trouble, merely for my own vindication. Attempts of this kind usually imply too much of a man's importance to himself, to be either acceptable or successful. Or, at best, it can be a point of no great moment to my real happiness, what the few persons to whom my little name is known, are pleased to say or think of me. Nothing but great inattention to our true circumstances, can afford us leisure either to censure others, or to justify ourselves; unless when the interest of religion or morality are evidently concerned. A few years will fix and determine our characters beyond all possibility of mistake; and till then it would be vain to hope for it.

The true reasons, therefore, of this publication are, the importance of the subjects treated of; and the probability that, upon this occasion, many persons who have not yet considered them with the attention they deserve, may be induced, (some from a motive of friendship, and others from curiosity,) to read what might appear in my name, the rather for being mine.

Had I wrote with a design to print, I should have chose to put my sentiments in another form: and perhaps a desire to avoid the censure of severe critics would have made me more solicitous about expression and method. But as I profess to publish not what I might, but what I really would have spoken, I could not allow myself to deviate from my first draught, except in a few places where I thought the sense entangled, ambiguous, or defective. For the same reason, I am forced to decline the judgment and correction of my friends, the advantages of which, as well as my own great need of them, I have more than once experienced.

If there is found in some places a coincidence of thought, or expression, I hope it will be excused; as I had not the least apprehension, at

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the time of composing, that what I designed for distinct and separate occasions, would ever appear abroad in one view.

In a word, so far as these essays are mine, I entreat a candid perusal; and that those who read them in order to form their judgment of the author, do not make their estimate from a sentence here and there; but have the patience to read them throughout. So far as what they contain is agreeable to Scripture, reason, and experience, an apology would be impertinent. In this case they deserve attention. Every particle of truth is valuable in itself, by whatever means or instruments it may be conveyed to us; and like a torch, displays itself by its own light, without any relation to the hand that bears it.

Liverpool, January 1, 1760.

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SIX

DISCOURSES, OR SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

JER. XVII. 9, 10.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

THE prophet Jeremiah had a hard task. He was appointed to inculcate unwelcome truths upon a vain, insensible people. He had the grief to find all his expostulations and warnings, his prayers, and tears, had no other effect than to make them account him their enemy, and to draw reproach and persecution upon himself. He lived to see the accomplishment of his own predictions; to see the land of his nativity desolated, the city destroyed, the people almost extirpated, and the few who remained transported into a distant country, to end their days in captivity.

Those, who have resolved, honestly and steadily, to declare the word of the Lord, have, in all ages, found a part of his trial: the message they have had to deliver has been disagreeable and disregarded. It is no hard matter to frame discourses that shall meet with some degree of general approbation; nor is it difficult to foresee the reception which plain truth must often meet with: but those who undertake a charge must perform it; and ministers are bound to declare to the people every thing that regards their welfare, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. If the watchman sees the danger coming, and does not blow the trumpet, to give the most public notice possible, he is answerable for all the evils that may follow. This is applied as a caution to the prophet Ezekiel; and, undoubtedly, every one who administers in holy things is concerned in it. 'So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand;' Ezek. xxxiii. Let this awful passage plead our

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excuse, if at any time we seem too urgent, or too plain, in our discourses. Too plain or urgent we cannot be. Our business is most important: opportunities are critical and precious. It is at the hazard of our souls if we speak deceitfully; and at the hazard of yours if we speak in vain.

In the preceding verses the prophet gives us a striking image of the opposition between the righteous and the wicked, in their present state, their hopes, and their end. The one is compared to a tree; the other to heath and stubble; the one, *planted* by streams of water; the other *exposed* on the salt burning desert: the one green, flourishing, and full of fruit; the other parched and withering: the hope of the one fixed on the Lord, the all-sufficient, Almighty God; the rash dependence of the other on a frail, feeble arm of flesh. Suitable to this difference is their end: the one, blessed, provided against all evil, so that he shall not be careful in the year of drought; the other, cursed, and cut off from the expectation of any amendment. 'He shall not see when good cometh.' The immediate design was, perhaps, to show the Jews that there was no way to avert the judgments of God, and to avoid the impending evils which threatened them, but by returning to the Lord, who had begun to smite, and who alone was able to heal them. But this they refused. They preferred their own contrivances; 'they leaned upon an arm of flesh;' sometimes upon Egypt, sometimes upon Assyria; one while presuming upon force: another while upon cunning. They were fruitful in expedients; and, when one broken cistern failed them, had recourse to another. But the prophet denounces the curse of God both on them and their supports; subjoining the words of my text; which may be understood, either as a further proof of what he had said, or an assigned cause of that obstinacy and perverseness he had complained of: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?'

But, without confining the words to the first occasion of their delivery, I shall consider them, as teaching us a doctrine, abundantly confirmed by many other passages of Scripture, 'That the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked:' which I shall endeavour to illustrate in a plain, familiar way. I shall, secondly, from the next verse, enforce this observation, That the heart (bad as it is) is incessantly under the divine inspection and examination: 'I the Lord search the heart and try the reins.' I shall, thirdly, consider the issue and design of this inquest; that 'every man' may, in the end, receive 'according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.' And may the Lord enable us to try and examine ourselves here, that hereafter we may be found unblameable, and without rebuke before him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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I. The heart is here characterized, first, As deceitful, and that above or in all things: second, As desperately wicked: in so dangerous, so deplorable a state, as is not to be conceived or found out. 'Who can know it?' The word in the original [אנש] which we translate *desperately wicked*, signifies a mortal, incurable disease; a disease which, seizing on the vitals, affects and threatens the whole frame; and which no remedy can reach. This idea leads us to that first transgression, whereby man, departing from God, fatally destroyed his soul's health, and sunk into that state so pathetically described by Isaiah, chap. i. 'The whole head is sick;' all the powers of the understanding disordered: 'and the whole heart faint;' all the springs of the affections enfeebled. 'From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness, but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores:' the evil growing worse continually; and no help or helper at hand: 'they have not been closed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment.' In consequence of this deep-rooted disorder, the heart is deceitful;—that is, *it deceives and fails us in every instance*: it promises more than it can perform: it misleads us with vain desires; and mocks us with unsuccessful efforts; like the faint attempts of a sick man to perform those actions which require a state of sound health and strength. That this is indeed the case, will, I think, appear from the following particulars; to which I entreat your attention.

Scripture and reason do jointly assure us, that all we see is the work of an Almighty Being:—the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, and even the grass and flowers of the field, loudly proclaim the presence, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God; yet behold the extreme *insensibility* of man. The wisest of our species, in those places where divine revelation was not known, ever mistook the *effect* for the *cause*; and ascribed that honour to the creature which is due only to the Creator. This was the very best of the case; for, in general, they sunk still lower, to worship stocks and stones; nay, to the eternal reproach of the natural understanding in the things of God, the more civilized any nation was, the more renowned for arts and arms, the further they were removed from those they termed *barbarians*, so much the more vile and contemptible the idolatry they established generally proved. The wisdom of the Egyptians paid divine honours to cats, monkeys, and the vilest reptiles. The fine taste of the Greeks consecrated those for gods, who, if they had lived amongst men, would have been deemed the pests of society; gods who were, professedly, both *patterns and patrons* of the most shameful vices. The prowess of the Romans established altars to fear and paleness. So deeply were they in-

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fatuated, so totally lost to common sense, that the apostle Paul's worst enemies could find no more plausible accusation against him, in one of the politest cities then in the world, than that he had ventured to affirm, 'they were no gods who were made with hands.'

Thus stood the case with Heathens; let us now come nearer home. It is to be feared, the greatest difference between them and the generality of us called *Christians*, is, that we do not partake in their gross *outward* idolatry. In other respects, our insensibility is, perhaps, as much greater than theirs, as our superior knowledge renders it more inexcusable. We acknowledge a God; that there is but one; that he is the cause of all things; that in him we live, and move, and have our being. Had the poor Heathens known this, we may judge, by their application to their mistaken worship, it would have had some influence on their practice. But what numbers of 'us' live together as 'without God in the world.' I come not here to make invectives; let conscience judge and give evidence accordingly. What do we think of the perpetual *presence of God* around us, and within us! We know that he is acquainted with all our thoughts, words, and actions; yet are we not more effectually restrained and awed by the presence of our fellow-worms, than by the regard of that eye which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun? How are we affected by the *works of God?* Has not the appearance of a fine day, or the beauty of an extensive prospect, a force to *extort* a sense of satisfaction from every one? but how few are there of us that can realize and acknowledge the hand of the glorious Author of these things? How *seldom* and how *faintly*, do we adopt the reflection of David? 'When I consider the heavens, the work of THY fingers, the moon and the stars which THOU hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?' Ps. viii. What is our judgment of the *word of God*, that glorious message of love, in which he has pointed out to us the way of salvation? Is not this book the least read, the least admired, and the least understood, of any? We are presently affected, we enter with all our spirit into the moving incidents (as we term them) of a romance or tragedy, though we know they are not founded on truth, nor have any relation to ourselves; but we can read the history of Jesus Christ, his life and doctrines, his death and passion, with indifference, though we say, all he spoke, or did, or suffered, was for our sakes. What are our thoughts *of that eternity*, to which we are posting, and to which, for aught we know, a few hours may introduce us? Is it not in the power of the meanest trifle that occurs to hide this important point from our view? It were easy to multiply particu-

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lars; but are not these sufficient to show the deceitfulness, the desperate wickedness, of the heart? Let me add one more: the judgments of God are now abroad in the world for these things. We have warnings all around us. We know that many fruitful lands in our neighbourhood are, in a manner, turned into a wilderness for the sins of the inhabitants. Every post brings us tidings of some new desolation, and we cannot tell how soon the case may be our own; but we have neither sympathy for our fellow-creatures, nor concern for ourselves. We hear, we pity, we forget in the same instant: but these things are remote. Is, then, what we *see* and *feel* more laid to heart? Our friends and acquaintance are taken from amongst us daily; some of them suddenly, in the midst of their warmest pursuits, or just upon the accomplishment of their most favourite schemes: we drop an unmeaning tear, and fly to every officious vanity for relief. Perhaps we are visited ourselves, and brought down to the borders of the grave: but, even against this, we are, for the most part, proof; or, if we feel a slight impression, it gradually wears off with the disease; and we return, as soon as we recover, to our former follies with re-doubled ardour.

This is a slight view of the *insensibility* of the human heart. Let us now consider its *ingratitude*. The Israelites were a sample of all mankind in this respect. God visited them, in Egypt, in the midst of their affliction. Without any application on their part, he undertook and effected their deliverance; he brought them from among their enemies 'with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm:' he led them safely through the wilderness: he screened them, with a cloud, from the piercing beams of the sun: he gave them light by night, in a pillar of fire: he fed them with bread from heaven, and caused streams to flow in the sandy desert: he made a covenant with them, and chose them for his peculiar people: he destroyed all their enemies before them; and, at length, put them in the full and peaceable possession of a land flowing with milk and honey. Interwoven with the history of God's gracious dealings with *them*, we have an account of their behaviour towards *him;* which was a continual series of rebellion, perverseness, murmuring, and disobedience. And are we better than they? In no wise. If we had leisure to consider the natural, civil, and religious advantages we enjoy as a nation, it would appear that *we*, likewise, have long been a peculiarly favoured people. The eye of the Lord our God has been upon us continually for good; and we have reason to say, 'He has not dealt so with any nation.' The history of all ages and countries affords us no instance of national prosperity that can be compared, either for degree or continuance, with what we have enjoyed

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since the Revolution: nor would it be easy, I fear, to find a parallel in any history, of our great ingratitude. What I have said in the former article will necessarily infer this: for it is impossible that those who have so little sensibility, either of the value of the gifts of God, or of his hand in bestowing them, can be grateful. The *seat* of gratitude is in the heart: the *proof* appears in the words and actions. Now, what are the prevailing subjects of conversation amongst us? Are the great things that God has done for us, the high obligations we are under to him, the comforts of our holy religion, and the nature of that blessed hope set before us by the Gospel, in the number? On the contrary, is not the least hint of these things in company, for the most part, received with reserve, if not with contempt and disgust? 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' God, and the things of God, have little place there; but levity, detraction, ill temper, and not seldom, profaneness and obscenity, in our discourses, too plainly discover the nature of the fountain from whence they flow. And if we look upon the actions of men in general, they are but of a piece with their words: engrossed by business, or enslaved to pleasure, for a season, all upon the stretch in amassing treasures; and then, perhaps, as restless and eager to dissipate them. Whatever passion rules them for the time, or whatever changes they may admit in their schemes, it is too plain, that a principle of gratitude to God, and a conscious desire to please him, has little influence either in forming or executing their plans. If these things are so, we have another instance of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart; it is full of the blackest ingratitude.

Need any thing be added to these two charges? Have we not said enough to confirm the prophet's assertion? if not, we can name a third particular, if possible, more absurd and inexcusable than either of the former. Man is not only insensible of the greatest part of those things which most concern him, and ungrateful and disobedient to his Maker and Preserver, his best and only friend, but he is *proud* too. Though he has nothing but what he has received, has received nothing but what he has perverted and mismanaged, and must render a strict account of his mismanagement, yet he is *proud*. We have already seen his blindness and baseness; there wanted only pride to make him a monster indeed. And need we spend time to prove this? No. *This*, at least, is an universal evil. Any man may easily perceive it in every man but himself; and every *thinking* man may perceive it working within himself incessantly. Whether we are alone or in company, whether with friends or enemies; with those above us or those below us, pride will insinuate. Nay, in the immedi-

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ate presence of God, when we come together to implore his mercy, while the most humbling confessions are upon our lips, and we are charging ourselves as most miserable, helpless sinners, even here pride will find us out. Those must be great strangers to themselves, who are not sensible of this. Now, 'why is dust and ashes proud?' proud of our failings! proud of our infirmities! Is it not from hence, because the heart is deplorably diseased, desperately wicked, and deeply deceitful?

I shall pursue this point no further. I shall not attempt to enumerate, at present, those 'evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, and blasphemies,' Mark vii. 21. which our Lord assures us do perpetually 'proceed from the heart.' I chose to insist on insensibility, ingratitude, and pride; because these are the vices which, in common life, we most condemn, are willing to think ourselves most free from, and can the least bear to be charged with. And it must be allowed, that between man and man, there is often the appearance of much generosity, gratitude, and condescension. But what will it avail us, that we stand upon some tolerable terms towards each other in these respects, if we are guilty before God. 'The Lord seeth not as man seeth.' 1 Sam. xvi.: he cannot be deceived or put off with a fair appearance: for he 'searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins.' This is the next point to be considered.

II. That the heart, with all its workings, and all its faults, is incessantly under the divine inspection and examination: 'I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins.' The *heart* and *reins*, as distinguished in Scripture-phrase, signify those different powers of the mind, the affections, and the thoughts. The words *search* and *try* have an emphasis in the original which cannot be reached without a paraphrase, if at all.

The Lord *searches* [חקר] the heart: he traces, investigates, the inmost principles of our souls to their first rise, with (if I may so speak) a mathematical accuracy. He *tries* [בחן] the reins: he watches every rising thought; he brings it to the test of his most pure law; he examines it with the utmost exactness; as a refiner essays his metals, with a purpose to reject whatever is inferior to the prescribed standard. To form a more just idea of this scrutiny, let us ask ourselves how we could bear to be obliged to declare aloud, in full company, every thought which passes through our minds, every wish and desire of which we are conscious, without the least reserve or exception? I am persuaded there are few people so lost to shame, but, if they were brought to this trial, they would rather choose to die than comply with it. Some things they would perceive, especially upon such a provocation, which they could hardly, upon any terms, prevail with themselves

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to express. The Lord has mercifully kept us from the knowledge of each other's hearts, any further than we are willing to disclose ourselves: for was every man compelled to speak all he thinks, there would be an end of society; and man would no more venture to dwell with man, than with tigers and bears. We know what mischief one ungoverned tongue may sometimes occasion! now, the tongue can do no evil, any further than as it is an instrument of disclosing the hidden things of the heart; yet it is but a small part of these the worst tongue is capable of disclosing. What, then, would be the case, if all our hearts were open, all our desires known to one another? What a mixture of confusion, and defiance, shame, rage, fear, and contempt, would overspread every countenance! And yet, thus we are exposed to the searching eye of a pure and holy God! The Lord knows the thoughts of man's heart, that they are vain. He long ago declared the result of his observation. 'God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,' Gen. vi. And, though the world was drowned for this, matters were not mended afterwards: for, upon a second survey, the judgment amounts to the same. 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips,' Ps. xiv. Isa. lix. Compare Rom. iii. How it was in our blessed Saviour's time we have already observed; and neither Scripture nor experience gives us reason to hope it has been better since, or is now. The apostle Paul has assured us, 'That, in the last day (a character which it is likely coincides with our days) perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,' 2 Tim. iii. Surely, I say, if these are marks of the *last days*, they must be already commenced. However, we see, upon the whole, how vile and hateful our hearts must appear in the sight of a heart-searching God.

III. One thing more we have to consider: that the Lord does not observe the heart of man with the indifference of a mere spectator, but as an impartial and inflexible judge; 'that he may give every man according to his ways, and according to the

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fruit of his doings.' This was the third particular to be spoken to.

But, alas! what can be said to this? Is it not sufficient to fill our souls with astonishment, and to cause *all faces to gather blackness!* to hear that the Lord has purposed to render to every man according to his works; and that he sits judge, not only upon outward actions, but examines the very thoughts and intents of the heart? Dare any of *us* abide the issue of such a trial? Which of us will presume to say, I am clean? To what purpose can any of us plead, I have not committed adultery, if God charges us with every inordinate desire, with every offence of the eye? What will it avail, that we have never assaulted the life of our neighbour, if every angry word, every degree of ill-will or revenge, is considered as murder in God's sight? It will not suffice to say, I am no thief or extortioner, unless we can clear ourselves of the most distant wish of possessing what was the property of another. If we are sure that we have not forsworn ourselves, but have performed to the Lord our oaths, it is only thus far well, that we shall not be condemned for open and actual perjury. But *if* we have at any time mentioned, or even *thought* of, the name of God, without the highest habitual reverence, we have taken his name in vain; and he has declared he will not hold us guiltless. That this is no gloss of my inventing, but the very words of truth, the declaration of him by whom we must be one day judged, the fifth chapter of Matthew will inform you. There a wanton glance is styled adultery; an angry expression censured as murder; and to speak unadvisedly, even of the hairs of our head, is deemed a branch of profane swearing. And why? Because all these spring from the heart, which is 'naked and open,' without either covering or concealment, 'in the sight of him with whom we have to do;' Heb. iv. This is thought uncomfortable doctrine, and not without reason, could we go no further. For there is nothing in heaven or in earth, in time or eternity, that affords the least glimpse of comfort to fallen man, if either God is strict to mark what is amiss, or if he, trusting in himself, presumes to plead with his Maker. The divine law requires perfect, unremitted, unsinning obedience: it denounces a curse upon the least failure. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10.; *every one*, without exception of person or circumstance, *that continueth not*, from the beginning to the end of life, *in all things*, great and small *to do them*, του ποιησαι αυτα, to finish them, to do them completely, without any defect either in matter or manner. Most uncomfortable doctrine indeed, were there no remedy provided! For the law of God is as eternal

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and unchangeable as his nature: it must not, it cannot be attempered or brought down to our capacities; neither can the penalty be evaded; for the God of truth has said, has sworn, that 'the soul that sinneth shall die,' Ezek. xviii. 4. Here, then, we must receive 'a sentence of death in ourselves,' 2 Cor. i. 9. Here, 'every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' Rom. iii. 19. Here we must say, with the apostle, 'Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall be no flesh justified in his sight,' Gal. ii. 16: 'for by the law is the knowledge of sin,' Rom. iii. 20. O that we could all sincerely say so; that we were brought to this, to feel and confess our lost, undone estate, and our utter inability to save ourselves! then, with joy, should I proceed to what I have had in my eye all along. For with what view have I said so much upon so disagreeable a subject? Why have I attempted to lay open some of the depths of the heart, but that I might more fully illustrate the wonderful grace and goodness of God, vouchsafed to us in the Gospel; and, at the same time, show the utter impossibility, not of being saved at all, but of finding salvation in any other way than that which God has appointed? For, behold! 'God has so loved the world,' John iii. that he sent his Son to accomplish that for us 'which the law could not do through the weakness of our flesh,' Rom. viii. Jesus Christ performed perfect obedience to the law of God in our behalf; he died, and satisfied the penalty due to our sins; he arose from the grave as our representative; he is entered into heaven as our fore-runner. 'He has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious,' Psalm lxviii. He is 'exalted' on high to 'bestow repentance and remission of sins,' Acts v. on all that seek to him. He has established his ordinances for this purpose: he has commanded his people not to 'neglect assembling themselves together.' He has charged his ministers, at such seasons, to declare first the guilty, deplorable condition of mankind, and then to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, 'by faith which is in him.' He has promised to be with them in this work to the end of the world. He has promised that where his word is faithfully preached he will accompany it 'with a spirit and power' that shall bear down all opposition. He has promised, that while we are speaking to the ear, he will, by his secret influence, apply it to the heart, and open it to receive and embrace the truth spoken, as in the case of Lydia. Who would venture to preach a doctrine so unpalatable to the carnal mind, as Jesus Christ, and him crucified? Who would undertake so ungrateful a task, as to depreciate that noble creature, *man*, and arraign him publicly of insensibility, ingratitude, pride, and deceit, were it not that we have first a *command*, and that at our peril, to speak plain; and second

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ly, a *promise* that we shall not speak in vain? Not that we can expect to be universally received: the time *is* come, when many will not endure sound doctrine,' 2 Tim. iv. 3. but some there will be, whom God is pleased to save by the *foolishness of preaching*, so called. Some such I would hope are in this assembly. To such I say, think not to satisfy the divine justice by any poor performances of your own; think not to cleanse or expiate the evil of your hearts by any of your own inventions; but 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' John i. 29. He died, that you may live: he lives, that you may live for ever. Put, therefore, your trust in the Lord; for with him is plenteous redemption. His sufferings and death are a complete, final propitiation for sin. 'He is able to save to the uttermost;' and he is as willing as he is able. It was *this* brought him down from heaven; for *this* he emptied himself of all glory, and submitted to all indignity. His humiliation expiates our pride; his perfect love atones for our ingratitude; his exquisite tenderness pleads for our insensibility. Only believe; commit your cause to him by faith and prayer. As a *Priest*, he shall make atonement for your sins, and present your persons and your services acceptable before God. As a *Prophet*, he shall instruct you in the true wisdom, which maketh wise to salvation; he shall not only cause you to know his commandments, but to love them too: he shall write them in your hearts. As a *King*, he shall evermore mightily defend you against all your enemies. He shall enable you to withstand temptations, to support difficulties, to break through all opposition. He shall supply you with every thing you need, for this life or a better, out of the unsearchable riches of his grace. He shall strengthen you to overcome all things; to endure to the end: and then he shall give you a place in his kingdom; a seat near his throne; a crown of life; a crown of glory; incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

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SERMON II.

ON THE SAVIOUR, AND HIS SALVATION.

1 Tim. i, 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Though the apostle Paul has wrote largely and happily upon every branch of Christian doctrine and practice; and, with respect to his writings, as well as his preaching, could justly assert, 'that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God;' yet there are two points which seem to have been (if I may so speak) his favourite topics, which he most frequently repeats, most copiously insists on, and takes every occasion of introducing. The one is to display the honours, power, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the other to make known the great things God had done for his own soul. How his heart was filled and fired with the first of these is evident from almost every chapter of his epistles. When he speaks of that mystery of godliness, 'God manifested in the flesh,' and the exceeding grace and love declared to a lost world through him, the utmost powers of language fall short of his purpose. With a noble freedom he soars beyond the little bounds of criticism; and, finding the most expressive words too weak and faint for his ideas, he forms and compounds new ones, heaps one hyperbole upon another; yet, after his most laboured essays to do justice to his subject, he often breaks off in a manner that shows he was far from being satisfied with all he could say. This reflection is most obvious to those who can read him in the *original:* but no disadvantages of a translation can wholly confine that inimitable ardour with which he seems to pour his whole soul into his words, when he is speaking of his Lord and Saviour. And he who can read the first chapters of his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, the second to the Philippians, or many similar passages, with indifference, must be, I say, not merely a person of small devotion, but of little taste and sensibility.

And how deeply his mind was impressed with the mercies he had received in his conversion and call, is equally conspicuous. He takes every occasion to aggrandize the goodness of God to

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himself; to exaggerate and deplore the guilt and misery of his former life, in which he once trusted; and to lament the small returns he was able to make for such blessings; even when he could say, without boasting, that he had 'laboured more abundantly' than the most diligent and zealous of his fellow-servants.

A powerful abiding sense of these two points upon the apostle's mind, have given rise to many sudden, lively, and beautiful digressions in the course of his writings. The context to the passage I have read is of this kind. Having incidentally spoken of the Gospel in the 11th verse, he is suddenly struck with the reflection of his own misery while ignorant of it, and the wonderful goodness of God, in affording him the knowledge of salvation, and honouring him, who was before a blasphemer, with a commission to publish the same glad tidings to others. This thought suspends his argument, and fills his heart and mouth with praise. And having acknowledged, that 'the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant' towards himself, he subjoins the words of the text for an encouragement to others; assuring us, that his case was not so peculiar, but that multitudes might be partakers with him in the same hope of mercy.

The words easily resolve into two parts:

First, A short, but comprehensive proposition, including the purport of the whole Gospel, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'

Secondly, A commendation of this doctrine in a two-fold respect, 'as a faithful saying,' and as 'worthy of all acceptation;' each of these illustrated by the instance of himself; when he adds, 'of whom I am chief.'

I. The apostle well knew the different reception the Gospel would meet in the world; that many poor, guilty souls, trembling under a sense of sin and unworthiness, would very hardly be persuaded that such sinners as they could be saved at all. To these he recommends it as 'a faithful saying,' founded upon the immutable counsel, promise, and oath of God, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners;* sinners in general; 'the chief of sinners;' such as he represents himself to have been. He knew, likewise, that many others, from a mistaken opinion of their own goodness, or a mistaken dependence on something of their own choosing, would be liable to undervalue this faithful saying. For the sake of these, he adds, 'it is worthy of all acceptation.' None are so bad but the Gospel affords them a ground of hope: none are so good as to have any just ground of hope without it. There was a time when St. Paul could have made a

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fair profession of himself likewise: he could say, 'circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to the righteousness which is by the law, blameless; Phil. iii. But he has been since taught to 'count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;' and is content to style himself *the chief of sinners.*

Having thus attempted to show the design and meaning of the words, I propose something more at large, to unfold the proposition, and point out some of those important and extensive truths it contains. I say, *some of them;* for it is not possible that either men or angels can fully sound the depth of this one sentence, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' I shall afterwards *infer*, and *enforce* the other part of the text, that it is indeed 'a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.' And may He, who came into the world to procure salvation for sinners, and is now exalted on high to bestow it, accompany the whole with his promised blessing.

The tenor of the proposition readily suggests three inquiries. First, Who this person is, here spoken of, Jesus Christ? Second, What is meant by the salvation he is said to have undertaken? Third, By what means he effected it?

Let us, *first*, speak of this gracious, this wonderful person Jesus Christ. We already bear his name as professed Christians; and we speak of him as *our Master*, and *our Lord:* and so far we say well. But, as he has told us, many will call him *Lord* at the great day, to whom he will profess, 'I never knew you whence you are, depart:' so it is to be feared there are many *now*, that outwardly acknowledge him, who neither know *whence* he is, nor *who* he is. Though we have Moses and the prophets, the apostles and evangelists, continually with us; though it is the immediate aim and intent of all their writings, in every history, promise, prophecy, type, ceremony, and law, to set *him* before our eyes; and though there is hardly an image in the material creation but is adopted by the Scriptures to shadow forth his excellency; ignorance of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for his people, is the great cause that religion appears so *low* and *contemptible* to some, and is found so *tedious* and *burdensome* by others. Let us, therefore, attend *to the record God has given of his Son;* for I propose in this article to say little of my own, but to lay before you the express, powerful, indubitable testimony of Holy Scripture.

And here we are taught first, *That Jesus Christ is God.* The first words of St. John's Gospel are full to this point: 'In the beginning' (that is, at the commencement of time and things, when

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as yet nothing else existed) 'was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' To prevent a possibility of mistake, and to confirm the eternity of this divine Word in the strongest manner, it is immediately added, 'the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him.' And, lest this likewise should be either contested or misunderstood, it is guarded by an universal negative, 'without him was not any thing made that was made.' Further, to prevent, if possible, the surmise, that, in these glorious words, the Eternal Word acted with a deputed power only, the apostle subjoins, 'In him was life,' life essentially; and from him, as the fountain, life and light proceeded to his creatures: 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men.' To this agrees the declaration of St. Paul: 'For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him;' (*by* his power and wisdom, *for* his glory and pleasure.) 'And he is before all things, and by him all things consist,' Col. i. Elsewhere he speaks of him expressly, as, 'over all, God blessed for ever; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' It were easy to enlarge this way; but I shall content myself with observing this general proof of the divinity of Christ, that the Scriptures, which were given to make us wise to salvation, do ascribe to him the names of God, particularly *Jehovah;* the essential attributes of God, such as *Eternity, Omnipresence, Omnipotence;* the peculiar works of God, as *Creation, Providence, Redemption,* and *Forgiveness of sin:* and, finally, commands us to pay him those *divine* honours, and to rely on him with that *absolute dependence,* which would be idolatry, if referred any where below the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth.

Again, we learn from Scripture, that *Christ* is truly and properly *Man.* This is, indeed, wonderful! therefore styled, 'the great mystery of godliness;' 1 Tim. iii. But that he, of whom we have begun to speak, is the very person who came into the world to save sinners, we have abundant proof. The apostle John, whose testimony we have already cited, says, a few verses lower, John i. 14. 'And the word, (that glorious Word, which was God with God) 'was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory,' (that is, we, his disciples, whose eyes were spiritually enlightened, for the world in general saw nothing of it,) 'as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' In other places, it is said, 'Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness, Matth. viii. 17. and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin;' Heb. iv. 15. 'As the

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children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also, himself, likewise took part of the same;' Heb. ii. 14. 'In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman;' Gal. iv. Many are the mistakes of mortals, and wide the extremes into which mistaken mortals run! Some have rashly ventured to deny our Lord's divinity; some have wildly and fancifully explained away his humanity: but may we, through grace, abide by the Scriptural truth, and be directed in the midst of the path of judgment.

From this mystical union of the divine and human nature in one person, the Scriptures speak of him, thirdly, under the character of a *Mediator*, the 'one Mediator between God and man.' To this idea the names *Jesus Christ*, which are as ointment poured forth, direct us in their original import. The former, which signifies the *Saviour*, pointing out the success and efficacy of his undertaking; the latter, which is the same with *Messiah*, or the *Anointed*, expressing both his divine appointment thereto, and the complete supply of all grace and power, wherewith he was filled for the discharge of it. Thus much for the person spoken of.

We proceed, in the next place, to consider the design of his appearance in the world, 'to save sinners.' And as the idea of *deliverance* presupposes a state of *distress*, it will be necessary previously to inquire into the condition of those whom he came to save; which is, indeed, emphatically implied in the appellation given them, *sinners*. Man having broken that law under which he was created, and with which his happiness was closely connected, fell under accumulated ruin. The image of God, in which he was formed, was defaced, and a far different image set up in his heart, even of him who had seduced him from his allegiance; darkness in the understanding, rebellion in the will, sensuality in the affections; the justice of God threatening a penalty he could neither satisfy nor sustain: the commandments of God still challenging an obedience he had no longer any power to yield. The very gifts and bounties of God with which he was encompassed, designed not only for his comfort, but his instruction, to lead him, as by so many steps, to their gracious Author, became, eventually, the occasions of withdrawing him further from his duty, and increasing, as well as aggravating his ingratitude. Thus stood man towards his Maker. With regard to his fellow-creatures, self-love and inordinate desires having raised a variety of interfering interests in the breasts of all, peace withdrew from the earth. Every man's heart and hand was set against his neighbour; and violence, rage, envy, and confusion, overspread the world. Nor could he be easier in himself; hurried by restless desires towards things either unsatisfying or unattainable, haunted with cares, tortured with pains, tired with opposition, shocked with disappoint-

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ment; conscience, like the hand that appeared in Belshazzar's feast, Daniel v. writing bitter things against him, when outward circumstances allowed a short repose; and vanity, like a worm, destroying the root of every flower that promised the fairest bloom of success. Behold a few outlines of the picture of fallen man! Miserable in his life, more miserable in the continual dread of losing *such a* life, miserable, most of all, that neither his fancy can feign, nor his fear conceive, the consequences of the death he dreads; which will introduce him to the immediate presence, to the *tribunal* of an incensed, almighty, ever-living God!

Such was the state from which Jesus Christ came to save us. He came to restore us to the favour of God; to reconcile us to ourselves, and to each other; to give us peace and joy in life, hope and triumph in death, and after death, glory, honour, and immortality. For he came, not merely to repair, and to restore, but to exalt; not only 'that we might have life,' the life we had forfeited, but 'that we might have it more abundantly,' John x. that our happiness might be more exalted, our title more firm, and our possession more secure, than the state of Adam in paradise could boast, or than his posterity could have attained unto, if he had continued unsinning upon the tenor of the first covenant.

Now, could we suppose it possible, that a set of innocent beings, without any default of their own, had sunk into a state of misery, we must confess it would have been great grace and favour in the Lord Jesus to save them. But let us not forget the stress laid in the text upon the word *sinners*. He came to save, not the *unfortunate*, but the *ungodly;* Rom. v. How, then, should every heart glow with love to him who hath thus loved us! If any of *us* can hear or speak of this subject with indifference or disgust, it is to be feared we are quite strangers to the *nature*, or the *necessity*, of that salvation with which God has graciously visited his people. Let us no more usurp the sacred words of *generosity*, *sensibility*, or *gratitude*, if this astonishing instance of divine goodness leaves us cold and unimpressed: especially if to this we join the consideration of the third point I proposed to speak of, By what means Jesus Christ effected this salvation for sinners.

In the passage before us, it is only said, that he *came into the world* on this account; which teaches us, *this* was the sole design of his advent; and that, coming on set purpose for this, he would leave nothing undone that was necessary to accomplish it. He emptied himself of that divine glory and honour he possessed with the Father from eternity. 'He bowed the heavens, and came down' to our earth; and that not with an external glory, as a celestial messenger, to constrain the attention and homage of

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mankind, 'but was made of a woman,' Gal. iv. not of high and noble extraction in the judgment of men, 'but in the form of a servant;' born in a stable, laid in a manger, brought up in an obscure and contemptible place, and reputed no higher than the son of a carpenter. 'He was despised and rejected of men: there was no form or comeliness in him,' Isa. liii. to attract a general regard: on the contrary, 'he came to his own and his own received him not,' John i. Further, as he was made of a woman, 'he was made under the law;' the one in order to the other: for this was the way divine wisdom had appointed, and which divine justice required, to make salvation possible to sinners. Eternal truth had pronounced tribulation, wrath, and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. All men, in every age and place, 'had corrupted their ways before God;' yet his mercy had designed, 'that where sin had abounded, grace should much more abound,' Rom. viii. Jesus Christ was the grand expedient, in whom 'mercy and truth met together,' Psalm, lxxxv. and the inflexible *righteousness* of God was brought to correspond and harmonize with the peace of sinful man. That justice might be satisfied, truth vindicated, and sinners saved, 'God so loved a lost world,' that when no inferior means could avail, when none in heaven or earth were *willing*, or *worthy*, or *able*, to interpose, 'he gave his only-begotten Son.' John iii. Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person, 'so loved the world,' that he assumed our nature, undertook our cause, bore our sins, sustained our deserved punishment; and, having done and suffered all that the case required, he is now gone before, 'to prepare a place,' John xiv. for all that believe in him and obey him. Man lay under a double incapacity for happiness: he could neither keep the law of God in future, nor satisfy for his past breach and contempt of it. To obviate the former, Jesus Christ performed a perfect, unsinning obedience in our stead. To remove the latter, he became 'the propitiation of our sins;' yielded up his life as a prey into the hands of murderers, and poured forth his precious blood, in drops of sweat in the garden, in streams from his side upon the cross. For this he endured the fiercest temptations of the devil, the scorn, rage, and malice of men, and drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God, when, it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin. His love carried him through all: and when he had finally overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In few words, he lived and died for us when upon earth; nor is he unmindful of us in heaven, but lives and intercedes on our behalf. He continually executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, to his people;

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instructing them by his word and Spirit; presenting their persons and prayers, acceptable to God through his merits; defending them, by his power, from all their enemies, ghostly and bodily; and ordering, by his providence, all things to work together for their good, till at length they are brought home to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

II. From what has been said, we may justly infer, in the first place, that 'this is,' as the apostle styles it, 'a faithful saying.' When man first fell, God, 'in the midst of judgment remembering mercy,' declared, unsought and undesired, 'that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,' Gen. iii. In every succeeding age he confirmed his purpose by types, promises, prophecies, and oaths. At length, in the fulness of time, Christ, 'the desire of all nations,' came into the world, fulfilled all that had been foretold, and encouraged every humble, penitent sinner to come unto him, that they might have life, pardon, and peace. To doubt or to deny his readiness to save, is, so far as in us lies, to 'make the word of God of none effect;' it is 'to charge God foolishly,' as though, like the heedless, unskilful builder in the Gospel, he had begun to build that which was not to be finished. If, after all that is set before us, it is possible for any soul to miss salvation that sincerely desires it, and seeks it in God's appointed way, it must be because the Lord Jesus Christ either *cannot* or *will not* save them. That he cannot, is flatly false; for 'all power is his in heaven and in earth,' Matth. xxviii. and it is particularly said, that 'he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him,' Heb. vii. and that he will not, is as false; for he himself hath said, 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,' John vi.

We may infer, secondly, that this doctrine is not only faithful, but 'worthy of all acceptation.' And here, methinks, I could begin anew. A point so much mistaken by some, and neglected by most, rather requires a whole, or many discourses, than to be passed over in few words. The most high and wise God has esteemed the redemption of mankind so precious, 'that he spared not his only Son,' Rom. viii. And are there any amongst us, in a land of Gospel light and liberty, where the words of wisdom are sounding in our ears every day, that dare make light of this message, just give it a hearing, and return to their farms, their merchandize, and their diversions, as though this unspeakable grace of God called for no return? Alas! 'How shall we escape, if we neglect this salvation?' Heb. ii. 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy.' It was dangerous, it was destructive, to refuse him that spoke upon earth; take heed how you trifle with him 'that speaketh from heaven!' To such as neglect this,

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'there remains no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries,' Heb. x. Let none of us think it is well with us, merely because we were born and educated in a Christian country, have means of instruction in our hands, and enjoy frequent opportunities of presenting ourselves before God in public worship. To thousands, these, so far from being advantages, will greatly aggravate their condemnation, and point the sting of the never-dying worm. Better were it for us to have been inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Luke x. yea, of Sodom and Gomorrah, than to appear in judgment with no better plea than this. Neither let us speak peace to ourselves, because we are not so bad as others, but perhaps live decently and comfortably; are useful in society, and perform many things that are commonly called *good works*. If these works spring from a true love of God, if they are framed according to the rule of his word, if they are performed by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, they are undoubtedly good, and shall be rewarded before men and angels: if otherwise, you have already your reward, in the complacence of your own minds, and the approbation of friends and acquaintance. The Christianity of the New Testament imports more than all this. It is, to believe in Jesus Christ; so to believe in him as to obey him in all his commands, to trust him in all his dispensations, to walk in his steps, copying out the bright example of his love, meekness, patience, self-denial, and active zeal for the glory of God, and the good of mankind. It is from a consciousness of our utter inability to perform these great things, to depend continually upon the promised aid and direction of his Holy Spirit, to seek this assistance by frequent fervent prayer, to offer up ourselves daily as living sacrifices unto God; and, finally, when we have done all, to be deeply sensible of our unworthiness of the least of his mercies, to confess ourselves unprofitable servants, and to place all our hopes upon this faithful saying, 'That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'

Thus, from the consideration of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatness of our misery by nature, and the wonderful things he has done and suffered for our redemption, we may learn the complete security of that salvation he has provided, the extreme danger of neglecting it, and the folly and presumption of attempting to establish a righteousness of our own, independent of him 'who is appointed of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. 1. In setting these things before you plainly and faithfully, I trust I have delivered my own soul. Time is short, life is precarious, and perhaps, to some, this may be the last opportunity of the kind that may be afforded

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them; God grant we may be wise in time, that, 'to-day, while it is called to-day,' we may hear his voice. Then we shall understand more of the text than words can teach us; then we shall experience 'a peace which passeth all understanding.' Phil. iv. 'a joy' which 'a stranger intermeddleth not with,' Prov. xiv. and a hope 'full of glory,' which shall be completed in the endless possession of those 'pleasures which are at the right hand of God,' Psalm xvi. where sin, and its inseparable attendant, sorrow, shall cease for ever; where 'there shall be no more grief, or pain, or fear,' Rev. xxi. but every tear shall be wiped from every eye.

SERMON III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

Acts, xi. 26. latter part.

———*And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

The evangelist Luke having contributed his appointed part to the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, proceeds, in the book we style *the Acts of the Apostles*, to inform us of the state and behaviour of those faithful followers he left behind him on earth, when he ascended, in the name and behalf of his people, to that heaven from whence his love had brought him down. We are informed that the gracious promises he had made while he was yet with them, began soon to take place; for, 'when the day of Pentecost was fully come,' Acts. ii. the Holy Spirit descended powerfully upon them, qualified them for preaching the Gospel to the whole world, and gave them an earnest of success, in making their first essay the happy means of converting about 'three thousand souls.'

The first believers, who 'were of one heart and one soul, who continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and had all things in common,' would probably have been well content to have lived together in Jerusalem, till death had successively transplanted them to the Jerusalem which is above. But this was not to be their rest: and their Lord, who had appointed them to be 'the salt of the earth,' and 'the light of the world,' Matth. v. made use of the rage of their enemies to effect that separation which those who are united by the grace of God are often so loath to yield to.

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Little did Herod and the Jews consider what would be the consequence of the persecution they raised against the church of Christ: but persecutors are always blind, and counteract their own designs. So here; for we are told that those whom they scattered abroad 'went every where preaching the word.' Thus, the word of the Lord 'ran and was glorified;' their bitterest enemies contributing to push it forward, till, in a few years, it was published 'from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,' Psalm lxxii.

For a while these faithful followers of the Lamb were known only by particular names, according to the different humours of different places; *Nazarenes, Galileans, the people of that way, pestilent fellows*, and the like; but at length, when they grew more numerous, when their societies were regularly formed, and their enemies universally alarmed, they began to bear a more general and emphatical name. St. Luke has informed us that this was the case in fact; and has likewise told us where it was first obtained; and, as I suppose he did not this without some design, I shall endeavour to draw some observations, for our use and direction, from this remark in the text, that 'the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch;' which I shall divide into two: thus—That the first general name by which the disciples were distinguished from the world, and united among themselves, was that of *Christians;* and, secondly, That this took place at Antioch. Thus the propositions lie in the text; but, in treating of each, it may be more convenient to invert this order, and consider the latter as previous to the other.

Now, if we consider the state of the city of Antioch, *before, at the time*, and *since* the event which is here recorded; from each of these views we may gather some lesson of instruction for ourselves; which ought to be our view in all we read, but especially when we read those books 'which are able to make us wise unto salvation,' and where no one sentence is insignificant. But let us not forget, with all we read and hear concerning religion, to mingle our frequent prayers to the great Author and Fountain of all grace, for that aid and assistance of his Holy Spirit without which we can do nothing to advantage.

Antioch, the capital of Syria, built about three hundred years before Christ, had long been the most flourishing city of the East: the most remarkable circumstance of its ancient state, as suiting our present purpose, was its having been the seat and residence of Antiochus, the most cruel and inveterate enemy of the church and people of God; the most direct and eminent type of that Antichrist who was afterwards to appear in the world; spoken

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of expressly by prophecy in Daniel, chap. xi. the completion of which you may see at large in the first book of Maccabees, in Josephus, and more briefly in the 79th and 80th psalms. But behold the wisdom, the power, and the providence of God! when his people were brought low, he helped them; he set those bounds to the rage of the adversary which could not be broken through; and at length, in his appointed time, he erected *this* first general standard of the Gospel upon the very spot where his grand enemy had so long encamped; and from whence his pernicious counsels and enterprises had so far proceeded. The application of this is very suitable to the times in which we now live. We see a powerful combination against the Protestant interest. Our enemies are many and mighty: their designs, we have reason to believe, are deep laid, and their efforts unwearied. Once and again our hopes have been almost swallowed up: and though we, through the singular goodness of God, have hitherto escaped, the storm has fallen heavy upon our brethren abroad. What may be the *immediate* issue of the present threatening appearances, we know not: but we may encourage ourselves from the experience of past ages, as well as from the sure promises of Scripture, that however 'the kings of the earth may assemble, and the rulers take counsel together,' Psalm ii. God 'has a hook in their nose, and a bridle in their jaws,' Isa. xxxvii. and all their force and policy shall at last bring about what they least desire and intend—the welfare and glory of God's church. He that caused the Christian name to go forth first at Antioch, where the truth of God had been most eminently and successfully opposed, can likewise introduce a temper and worship, *truly Christian*, in those places which at present seem destitute of either. And for this it is our duty continually to pray.

Again, if we consider the state of Antioch at the time the disciples were first called *Christians* there, we may learn how to form a judgment of our profession. This city was then luxurious and dissolute to a proverb, even in Asia, where luxury and effeminacy were universally prevalent. Whether this name was assumed by the disciples, or imposed by their enemies, we cannot doubt but that, in common repute, it was a term of the most extreme reproach and ignominy. Nor can I suppose the worst appellations any sect in succeeding ages has been doomed to bear, have implied half of that contempt which an inhabitant of Antioch or Daphne expressed, when he called a man a *Christian*. If we imagine a set of people, who, at this time, in France, should style themselves the disciples of the late Damien, and be called after his name, we may, perhaps, form some idea of what the people of Antioch understood by the word *Christian*. The

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apostle assures us that he and his brethren were 'accounted the filth and offscouring of all things,' 1 Cor. iv. ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου—πάντων περίψημα. He has chosen two words of the most vile and despicable signification; which, I believe, no *two* words in our language will fully express. The outward state of things is since changed, and the external profession of Christianty is now no reproach; but let us not imagine the nature of things is changed too. It was then received as a maxim, that 'all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. and it is a truth still, founded upon Scripture, and confirmed by experience. If we know nothing of it in our own cases, it is because our tempers and manners have hitherto been too conformable to that wicked world which in our baptisms we were engaged to renounce. I shall have occasion to speak further upon this point before I close: in the mean time, here is a test to examine ourselves by. If we could not glory in the Christian name, under the same circumstances as the disciples bore it at Antioch, we are as yet unworthy of it. Let conscience judge.

Once more: Antioch, the city where the Gospel once so flourished, that from thence the whole Christian church received that name by which it is still called, *is now no more*. It has been a heap of ruins more than five hundred years. The light of the gospel has been long withdrawn: gaiety and festivity are likewise forgot. Slavery, imposture, and barbarism, have blotted out the resemblance, and even the remembrance of what it once was. O that our *yet* happy land could from hence take a timely warning! Our privileges are great; perhaps greater, all things considered, than any nation has possessed since the days of Solomon. Our preservation hitherto has been wonderful; often have we been in extreme danger, but have always found deliverance at hand. Yet let us not be high minded; our sins and aggravations (it is to be feared) have been, and still are, very great likewise; and God, we see, is no more a respecter of places than of persons. Antioch is ruined, Rev. iii. Philadelphia, which received so honourable a testimony from the mouth of the Lord himself, has been long since destroyed. Let us beware of boasting; let us not presume too much on what we are; nor say, 'the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord is here,' Jer. vii. we are the bulwark of the Protestant interest, and none can hurt us. If the Lord is with us, it is true; if we 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,' we are safe; but if otherwise, we know not how soon God may visit us with his heavy judgments, war, famine, discord, or pestilence, till we become a warning to others, as others are now proposed warnings to us. Our liberties, our properties, our religion, are in God's hands: may he incline our

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hearts to true repentance, lest at length these blessings should be taken from us, and given to a people that will bring forth more fruit.

There is an ambiguity in the original word χρηματισαι, which our translation renders *called:* for though that is the more general sense it bears in Heathen writers, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, except in this passage, and in Rom. vii. 3. it signifies to be taught or warned by a revelation from heaven. Thus it is spoken of Joseph and the wise men, Matt. ii. Simeon, Luke ii. Cornelius, Acts x. Noah, Heb. xi. and elsewhere. It does not, therefore, appear quite certain from the text, whether the disciples chose this name for themselves, or the wits of the time fixed it upon them as a mark of infamy; or, lastly, whether it was by the special direction of the Spirit of God that they assumed it. But I incline to the latter supposition; partly, because in those happy days it was the practice and the privilege of the disciples to ask, and to receive, directions from on high in almost every occurrence; but, chiefly, on account of the excellent instructions couched under this emphatical name, sufficient to direct and to animate those who were to be known by it, in their duty to each other, to God, and to the world. Some of these I propose to infer from the other proposition contained in the text, that the first name by which the followers of the Gospel were generally known was that of *Christians*.

Hitherto, as they were separated from the world, so they had been divided among themselves! and so strong were prejudices subsisting between the members of the same body, that we find, in the beginning of this chapter, some one of the party contended with the apostle Peter only for eating with those of another. Hence we read the phrases, *we of the Jews, they of the Gentiles*. But henceforward they are taught to blend and lose the greater distinction of *Jew* and *Gentile*, and the lesser divisions of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, in a denomination derived from him who alone was worthy to be their head, and who was equally 'rich in mercy to all that call upon him' in every place.

And as they thus were taught union and affection among themselves, so their relation to God, the way of their access to him, and their continual dependence upon him, were strongly implied in this name. A Christian is the child of God by faith in Christ: he draws near to God in the name of Christ: he is led and supported by the Spirit of Christ: Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending of the faith, hope, and love of every believer. *From him* alone every good desire proceeds: *by him* alone every good purpose is established; *in him* alone

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any of our best performances are acceptable. Let us beware (it is a necessary caution in these days) of a Christianity without Christ. I testify to you in plain words, that this is no better than a house without a foundation, a tree without a root, a body without a head, a hope without a hope: a delusion, which, if persisted in, will end in irremediable destruction: 'for other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Christ Jesus:' he is the corner-stone, 'chosen of God, and precious.' Alas, for those who are offended with him in whom God is well pleased! but those who trust in him shall never be ashamed. This is another important lesson comprised in the word *Christian*.

Nor is this all; but in the name of *Christian* they *might*, and we *may*, read the terms upon which we are to stand with the world. If I was asked what the words *Platonist* or *Phythagorean* signified, I should say they expressed certain persons who embraced the sentiments, submitted to the institutions, and imitated the conduct of Pythagoras and Plato; and in order to describe them further, I need do no more than give an account of the lives and writings of their respective masters. Could I thus, in some distant, unknown country, where the name of Christianity had been only heard of, have an opportunity of declaring the history, the doctrines, and the laws of Jesus Christ; how he lived, how he taught, how he *died*, and upon what account; what usage he himself received from the world, and what he taught his followers to expect after he should leave them: if I should then describe the lives and the treatment of his most eminent servants, who lived immediately after him, and show, 'that as he was, so were they in the world,' 1 John iv. that, pursuing his pattern, they found exactly the same opposition; would not the inhabitants of such a country conclude, even as the Scripture has assured us, that the temper of Christianity, and the temper of the world, must be exactly opposite; and that, as it is said, 'Whoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God,' James iv. so, whoever had boldness to profess himself a friend of God, must necessarily be an enemy to the world, and would be sure to find the world, and all in it, at sworn enmity with him? But if I should further tell them, that though the same laws, the same warnings, and the same examples, still subsist: yet that fierce opposition I have spoken of is, at length, nearly over, so that none are better pleased with the world, or more agreeable to it, than many of those who speak most honourably of the Christian name; would not these people immediately infer, that one of these contending powers must have yielded to the triumphant genius of the other? that either the whole world were become such Christians as those who were first styled so at Antioch, or

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that modern Christians must be, for the most part, so only by profession, and have neither right nor pretence to their ancient spirit? And could we suppose, further, that after this information, some of these remote people were to land at Dover, and make the tour of this kingdom, can you think they would be long in determining which of these is indeed the case?

Numbers are deceived by restraining many passages in the New Testament to the times in which they were delivered, though it seems to have been the great care of the apostles to prevent, if possible, our making this mistake. St. John having expressly said, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' immediately explains what he means by the world, namely, 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' 1 John ii. If high distinction, vain show, and sensual pleasure, make no part of the world at this day, I must allow that we have no part in the apostle's decision, nor any cause to observe his caution; but if these things are as highly prized, as eagerly, and almost as universally pursued now in Britain as they were sixteen hundred years since at Rome and Antioch, surely we bear the name of Christians in vain; if our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our comforts and our cares are not very different from those of the generality among whom we live. 'If any man,' says St. Paul, 'have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his,' Rom. viii. Now, whatever more is meant by the phrase of 'having the spirit of Christ,' it must certainly mean thus much at least, a disposition and turn of mind in some degree conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to be evidenced by a life and conversation suitable to his precepts and example. 'He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners: he went about doing good,' Heb. vii. He was gentle and compassionate, meek and patient under the greatest provocations: so active for the glory of God that his zeal, by a strong and lively figure, is said to have 'eaten him up,' John ii. so affected with the worth of souls, that he wept over his bitterest enemies: so intent on his charitable designs towards men, that an opportunity of helping or instructing them was as meat and drink when he was hungry, John iv. and made him forget weariness and pain: so full of devotion towards God, that when the day had been wholly consumed in his labours of love, he would frequently redeem whole nights for prayer! Luke vi. But I must stop. No pen can describe, no heart conceive, the life of the Son of God in the flesh! Yet, in all these things he was our great exemplar; and no profession or appellation can benefit us, unless we are of those who copy closely and carefully after him. For thus saith the beloved apostle, 'He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk

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even as he walked. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,' 1 John ii.

I shall conclude with a short address to three sorts of persons. And, first, If there are any such here, (would to God this part of my labour may prove needless,) I would recommend this subject to the consideration of those who have *almost*, if not *altogether*, cast off the honourable name into which they were baptized; who, trusting to what they call the light of nature, and the powers of human reason, venture to determine the fitness of things by their own standard, and declare in their words, as well as by their actions, 'they will not have this man to rule over them,' Luke xix. Is not this an unaccountable event upon your plan, that the name which first went out from Antioch, under the greatest disadvantages, should so soon overspread the world, without arts or arms, without any force, or any motive of an external kind? Is it possible that any kind or degree of enthusiasm could influence, not a *few* at one time, or in one place, but *multitudes*, of all ages, sexes, tempers, and circumstances, to embrace a profession which, in proportion to the strictness wherewith it was followed, was always attended with reproach and suffering? Those places which were most noted for opposition to this way, have been long since buried in the dust: but a succession of those whom the world counted 'not worthy to live,' and 'of whom the world was not worthy,' Acts xxv. Heb. xi. has always subsisted, and still subsists. Had you lived in those days when Jesus Christ assured a company of poor, disregarded fishermen, that neither the power nor the policy of the world, nor the 'gates of hell should ever prevail against them,' Matt. xvi. you might have been less inexcusable in refusing to believe him. But now, when you have the accomplishment of this promise before your eyes, and well know (for you are book read) what various attempts have been made, with what steadiness and formidable appearances they have been for a while carried on, to render these words vain, but how, at length, all such attempts have totally failed, and ended in the confusion and ruin of those who engaged in them—what tolerable reason can you assign for the part you act? Does the tendency of the Gospel displease you? Is it an enemy to that virtue you are so fond to talk of? On the contrary, we are ready to put it to the proof, that here are not only the sublimest maxims of true virtue, but that the practice, or even the real love of virtue, are quite unattainable upon any other scheme; and that the most specious pretences, independent of this, are no more than great 'swelling words of vanity,' 2 Pet. ii. I speak the more freely upon this point, because I speak from experience. I was once as you are.

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I verily thought that I 'ought to do,' (or at least that I might do,) 'many things against Jesus of Nazareth,' Acts, xxvi. None ever went further than I, according to the limits of my years and capacity, in opposing the truths of the Gospel. But the mercy of God spared me; and his providence having led me through various changes and circumstances of life, in each of which I had a still deeper conviction of my former errors, has at length given me this opportunity to tell you, (O that I could speak it to your hearts,) 'that at the name of Jesus every knee,' sooner or later, 'must bow,' Phil. ii. before him every heart must either bend or break: that he is full of mercy, love, and pardon, to all that submit themselves to him; but that, ere long, he shall be 'revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to execute judgment, and to convince ungodly sinners of all the hard speeches they have spoken against him,' Jude.

I would, 2dly, address those who, while they *profess to believe* in the Lord Jesus, do, *in their works*, manifestly *deny him*, Tit. i. This is, if possible, a worse case than the other; yet how frequent! You believe that Jesus Christ came into the world, both to be a propitiation for sin, and also to give us an example of a godly life, and yet continue contentedly in the practice of those sins for which he poured forth his soul, in the pursuit of those vices which the Gospel disallows, and in the indulgence of those desires which your own consciences condemn. Think, I entreat you, of these words in the 50th Psalm: 'Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth: seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?' This question is now proposed to our consciences, that we may be aware, in time, of the danger of insincerity; and not 'perish with a lie in our right hands,' Isa. xliv. If we cannot answer it now, what shall we say in that awful hour when God shall speak it in ten thousand thunders, to all who, in this life, presumed to mock him with an empty outside worship, 'drawing near him with their lips,' when 'their hearts were far from him?' Isa xxix. For the day is at hand, 'the day of the Lord,' when God shall bring 'every hidden thing to light,' when every man's work shall be tried and weighed; *tried* in the fire of his purity, *weighed* in the balance of his righteousness; and as the issue proves, so must the consequence abide to all eternity: a trial and a scrutiny which no flesh could abide, were it not for the interposing merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Judge. But he has already told us, that he will then own none but those who were faithfully devoted to his service here. To the urgent cries and strongest pleas of others, he will give no other answer but 'I know you not; I never knew you,' Matt. vii. 'de-

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part from me ye accursed, into everlasting fire,' Matt. xxv. What will it then avail to plead our privileges, when, if this be all, we may read our doom already? 'And that servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: for unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver,' Luke xii. Psalm i.

Finally, Let those who through grace have attained to worship God 'in spirit and in truth,' be careful to adorn and hold fast their profession. 'You see your calling, brethren:' let the name of Christian always remind you of your high obligation to, and continual dependence upon, the Author of your faith. Use it as a means to animate and regulate your whole behaviour; and if, upon some occasions, you find undeserved ill offices, or unkind constructions, wonder not at it: thus it must and will be, more or less, to all who would 'exercise themselves in keeping a conscience void of offence,' Acts. xxiv. Yet be careful to model your actions by the rule of God's word. Our Lord says, 'Blessed are ye when men revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake,' Matt. v. Observe, first, the evil spoken of you must be false and groundless; and, 2dly, the cause must be 'for the sake of Christ,' and not for any singularities of your own, either in sentiment or practice, which you cannot clearly maintain from Scripture. It is a general blessing when the innocence and simplicity of the dove is happily blended with true wisdom. It is a mercy to be kept from giving unnecessary offence in these times of division and discord. Endeavour that a principle of love to God, and to mankind for his sake, may have place in all your actions; this will be a secret, seasonable, and infallible guide, in a thousand incidents, where particular rules cannot reach. 'Be sober, be vigilant;' 'continue instant in prayer;' and in a little while all your conflicts shall terminate in conquest, faith shall give place to sight, and hope to possession. Yet a little while, and 'Christ, who is our life, shall appear,' Col. iii. to vindicate his truth, to put a final end to all evil and offence; and then *we also*, even all who have loved him, and waited for him, 'shall appear with him in glory.' Isa. xxv.

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SERMON IV.

ON ALL THINGS BEING GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.

Rom. viii. 32.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Various have been the disputes, and various the mistakes of men, concerning the things of God. Too often, amidst the heat of fierce contending parties, truth is injured by both sides, befriended by neither. Religion, the pretended cause of our many controversies, is sometimes wholly unconcerned in them: I mean 'that pure religion and undefiled,' that 'wisdom which, coming from above,' abounds with proof of its divine original, being 'pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to been treated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;' James iii. Religion is a serious and a personal concern. It arises from a right knowledge of God and ourselves; a sense of the great things he has done for fallen man; a persuasion, or, at least, a well-grounded hope, of our own interest in his favour; and a principle of unbounded love to *him who* thus *first loved us*. It consists in an entire surrender of ourselves, and our all, to God; in setting him continually before us, as the object of our desires, the scope and inspector of our actions, and our only refuge and hope in every trouble: finally, in making the goodness of God to us the motive and model of our behaviour to our fellow-creatures, to love, pity, relieve, instruct, forbear, and forgive them, as occasions offer; because we ourselves both need and experience these things at the hand of our heavenly Father. The two great points to which it tends, and which it urges the soul, where it has taken place, incessantly to press after, are, *communion* with God, and *conformity* to him; and, as neither of these can be fully attained in this life, it teaches us to pant after a better; to withdraw our thoughts and affections from temporal things, and fix them on that eternal state, where we trust our desires shall be abundantly satisfied; and the work begun by *grace*, shall be crowned with *glory*.

Such is the religion of the Gospel. This the life and doctrine of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, jointly recommend. An excellent abridgment of the whole we have in this eighth chapter to the Romans, describing the state, temper, practice, privileges, and immoveable security of a true Christian. Every

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verse is rich in comfort and instruction, and might, without violence, afford a theme for volumes; particularly, that which I have read may be styled *evangelium evangelii;* a complete and comprehensive epitome of whatever is truly worthy our knowledge and our hope. The limits of our time are too narrow to admit any previous remarks on the context, or, indeed, to consider the subject according to the order of an exact division; therefore, I shall not at present use any artificial method; but, taking the words as they lie, I shall offer a few practical observations, which seem naturally and immediately to arise from the perusal of them, making such improvement as may occur as I go along. And may the Father of mercies, who has put this treasure into our hands, favour us with his gracious presence and blessing.

I. From the words, 'He spared not his own Son,' we may observe, in one view, the wonderful goodness, and inflexible severity of God. So great was his goodness, that when man was, by sin, rendered incapable of *any* happiness, and obnoxious to *all* misery; incapable of restoring himself, or of receiving the least assistance from any power in heaven or in earth; God spared not his only begotten Son, but, in his unexampled love to the world, gave him, who alone was able to repair the breach. Every gift of God is good: the bounties of his common providence are very valuable; that he should continue life, and supply that life with food, raiment, and a variety of comforts, to those who, by rebellion, had forfeited all, was wonderful: but what are all inferior blessings, compared to this unspeakable gift of the Son of his love? Abraham had given many proofs of his love and obedience before he was commanded to offer up Isaac upon the altar; but God seems to pass by all that went before, as of small account in comparison of this last instance of duty. 'Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me,' Gen. xxii. Surely we likewise must say, 'In this was manifested the love of God to us, because he gave his Son, his only Son, to be the life of the world.' But all comparison fails; Abraham was bound in duty, bound by gratitude; neither, was it a free-will offering, but by the express command of God: but to us the mercy was undesired, as well as undeserved. 'Herein is love; not that we loved God;' on the contrary, we were enemies to him, and in rebellion against him, 'but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins,' the sins we had committed against himself. My friends, ought not this love to meet a return? Is it not most desirable to be able to say, with the apostle, on good grounds, 'We love him because he first loved us?' Should it not be our continual inqui-

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ry, 'What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?' especially for this, which is both the crown and the spring of all the rest? Are we cold and unaffected at this astonishing proof of divine love? and are not our hearts grieved and humbled at our own ingratitude? Then are we ungrateful and insensible indeed!

The justice and severity of God is no less conspicuous than his goodness in these words: as he spared not to give his Son for our sakes, so, when Christ appeared in our nature, undertook our cause, and was charged with our sins, though he was the Father's well-beloved Son, 'he was not spared.' He drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs: he bore all the shame, sorrow, and pain; all the distress of body and mind, that must, otherwise, have fallen upon our heads. His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was one series of humiliation and suffering, John xviii. Observe him in the world, despised, vilified, persecuted even to death, by unreasonable and wicked men; ridiculed, buffetted, spit upon; and, at length, nailed to the accursed tree! Consider him in the wilderness, Luke iv. given up to the power, and assaulted by the temptations of the devil! Behold him in the garden, Luke xxii. and say, 'Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger?' How inconceivable must that agony be which caused his blood to forsake its wonted channels, and start from every pore of his body! Behold him, lastly, upon the cross, Matt. xxvii. suffering the most painful and ignominious death; suspended between two thieves; surrounded by cruel enemies, who made sport of his pangs; derided by all that passed by! Attend to his dolorous cry, expressive of an inward distress beyond all we have yet spoken of, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' St. Paul reminds the Galatians, that, by his preaching among them, Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes,' Gal. iii. Would it please God to bless my poor words to the like purpose, you would see a meaning you never yet observed in that awful passage, 'Tribulation, and wrath, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil,' Rom. ii. for the punishment due to the sins of all that shall stand at the last day on the right hand of God met and centered in Christ, the Lamb of expiation; nor was the dreadful weight removed till he, triumphant in death, pronounced, 'It is finished,' John xix. Let us not think of this as a matter of speculation only; our lives, our precious souls, are concerned in it. Let us infer from hence, how 'fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. The apostle Peter, 2 Pet. ii. admonishes those to whom he wrote from the fearful example of the angels who sinned, and

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of the old world; where the same word is used as in my text, ουκ εφεισατο, 'he spared them not;' that is, he punished them to the utmost; he did not afford them the least mitigation. It is a frequent figure of speech, by which much more is understood than is, or can be expressed. Much more then, may we say, if God 'spared not his Son, what shall be the end of those who obey not the Gospel?' 1 Pet. iv. If the holy Jesus was thus dealt with, when he was only accounted a sinner by imputation, where shall the impenitent and the ungodly appear? 'If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' Luke xxiii. The punishment of sin in the soul, in a future state, is two-fold: the *wrath of God* in all its dreadful effects, typified by fire unquenchable, Mark ix. and *the stings of conscience*, represented by a worm that never dies. Our Lord endured the former; but the other, perhaps, could have no place in him, who was absolutely perfect and sinless. But if the *prospect* of *one* made him amazed and sorrowful beyond measure, what consternation must the *concurrence* of *both* raise in the wicked, when they shall hear and feel their irrevocable doom! May we have grace so to reflect on these things, that we may flee for safety to the hope set before us, to Jesus Christ, the only, and the sure *refuge from* that approaching *storm*, which 'shall sweep away all the workers of iniquity as a flood, Isa. xxiii.

II. Here, as in a glass, we may see the evil of sin. The bitter fruits of sin are, indeed, visible every where. Sin is the cause of all the labour, sickness, pain, and grief under which the whole creation groans. Sin often makes man a terror and a burden, both to himself and those about him. Sin occasions discord and confusion in families, cities, and kingdoms. Sin has always *directed* the *march*, and *ensured* the *success*, of those instruments of divine vengeance whom we style *Mighty Conquerors*. Those ravagers of mankind, who spread devastation and horror far and wide, and ruin more in a few days than ages can repair, have only afforded so many melancholy proofs of the malignity of sin. For this, a shower of flaming brimstone fell upon a whole country; for this, an overwhelming deluge destroyed a whole world; for this, principalities and powers were cast from heaven, and are reserved under *chains* of *darkness*, 2 Pet. ii. to a more dreadful doom. But none of these things, nor all of them together, afford such a conviction of the heinous nature and destructive effects of sin as we may gather from these words 'He spared not his own Son.'

III. Here we may likewise see the value of the human soul. We ordinarily judge of the worth of a thing by the price which a wise man, who is acquainted with its intrinsic excellency, is wil-

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ling to give for it. Now, the soul of man was of such estimation in the sight of God who made it, that, when it was sinking into endless ruin, 'he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him for our ransom.' Two things especially render the soul thus important in the view of infinite wisdom: first, the capacity he had given it; for 'he formed it himself,' Isa. xliii. capable of knowing, serving, and enjoying God; and, by consequence, incapable of happiness in any thing beneath him; for nothing can satisfy any being but the attainment of its proper end: and, secondly, the duration he had assigned it, beyond the limits of time and the existence of the material world. The most excellent and exalted being, if only the creature of a day, would be worthy of little regard.* On the other hand, immortality itself would be of small value to a creature that could rise no higher than the pursuits of animal life. But in the soul of man the capability of complete happiness or exquisite misery, and that for ever, make it a prize worthy the contention of different worlds. For this an open intercourse was maintained between heaven and earth, till at length the Word of God appeared 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' that, in our nature, he might encounter and subdue the sworn enemy of our species. All that has been transacted in the kingdoms of providence and grace, from the beginning of the world, has been in subserviency to this grand point, the redemption of the deathless soul. And is it so! And shall there be found among us numbers utterly insensible of their natural dignity, that dare disparage the plan of infinite wisdom, and stake those souls for trifles which nothing less than the blood of Christ could redeem! There is need to use great plainness of speech; the matter is of the utmost weight; be not, therefore, offended that I would warn you against 'the deceitfulness of sin.' Suffer not your hearts to be entangled in the vanities of the world; either they will fail, and disappoint you in life, or at least you must leave them behind you when you die. You must enter an invisible unknown state, where you cannot expect to meet any of those amusements or engagements which you now find so necessary to pass away the tedious load of time that hangs upon your hands. You to whom a few hours of leisure are so burdensome, have you considered how you shall be able to support an eternity? You stand upon a brink, and all about you is uncertainty. You see, of your acquaintance, some or other daily called away, some who were as likely to live as yourselves. You know not but you may be the very next. You cannot be certain but 'this very night your soul may be required of you,' Luke xii. Perhaps a few hours may

* Vide Young's Night Thoughts, 7th Night.

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introduce you into the presence of that God whom you have been so little desirous to please. And can you, in such a situation, sport and play with as little concern as the lamb, already marked out to bleed to-morrow? Oh, it is strange! How fatally has the god of this world blinded our eyes! and how dreadful must your situation be in death, if death alone can undeceive you!

IV. Lastly, we may gather from all these words the certainty of the Gospel-salvation. God himself delivered up his Son for us all. He declared himself well pleased with him, Matt. iii. as our Surety, upon his first entrance on his work; and testified his acceptance of his undertaking, in that he raised him from the dead, and received him into heaven as our Advocate. Now, 'if God himself be thus for us, who can be against us?' Rom. viii. If he who only has a right to judge us is pleased to justify us, 'who can lay any thing to our charge? If Christ, who died' for our sins, and is risen on our behalf, has engaged to 'intercede for us, who shall condemn?' 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Nor is this all; but every thing we stand in need of is fully provided; and we may well argue, as the apostle has taught us elsewhere, 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,' Rom. v. or, as in the passage before us, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,' when we were alienated from him, 'how shall he not with him freely give us all things,' now he has taught us to pray, and given us his own promises to plead, for all we ask? This brings me to the second clause of the text; only it may be proper, before I enter upon it, to subjoin two cautions, to prevent mistakes from what has been already said.

1st. Let us remember that all is *free gift*. He *gave* his Son; he *gives* all things with him. The Gospel allows no place for merit of our own in any respect. There was no moving cause in us, unless our misery may be deemed such. Our deliverance, in its rise, progress, and accomplishment, must be ascribed to grace alone; and he that would glory, must 'glory in the Lord,' 1 Cor. i.

2d. Let us observe the apostle's phrase. He says not absolutely for all, but for *us* all; that is, those who are described in the former part of the chapter, 'who are led by the Spirit of God, who walk not after the flesh, who are delivered from the bondage of corruption,' who have liberty to call God 'Abba, Father,' and prove their relation by following him as 'dear children.' Christ is 'the author of eternal salvation to those only who obey him,' Heb. v. It cannot be otherwise, since a branch of that salvation is to deliver us 'from our sins,' and 'the present evil world,' Gal.

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i. to 'purify us from dead works, to serve the living God.' 'Be not deceived, God will not be mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall,' notwithstanding all that Christ has done and suffered, yea, so much the rather, 'of the flesh reap corruption,' Gal vi.

The text having declared that God spared not his Son for our sakes, proceeds to infer, that 'with him he will assuredly give us all things.' Here we may take notice, first, that the words *all things* must be limited to such as are needful and good for us. It may be said of many of our desires, 'Ye know not what ye ask,' Matt. xx. in such cases, the best answer we can receive is a denial. For those blessings which God has promised absolutely to give, such as pardon, grace, and eternal life, we cannot be too earnest or explicit in our prayers; but in temporal things we should be careful to ask nothing but with submission to the divine will. The promises, it is true, appertain to 'the life that now is, as well as that which is to come,' 1 Tim. iv. 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are ours, if we are Christ's,' 1 Cor. iii. But the particular *modus* of these things God has reserved in his own hands, to bestow them as best shall suit our various tempers, abilities, and occasions. And well for us that it is so; for we should soon ruin ourselves if left to our own choice: like children, who are fond to meddle with what would hurt them, but refuse the most salutary medicines, if unpalatable; so we often pursue, with earnestness and anxiety, those things which, if we could obtain them, would greatly harm, if not destroy us. Often, too, with a rash and blind impatience, we struggle to avoid or escape those difficulties which God sees fit to appoint for the most gracious and merciful purposes—to correct our pride and vanity, to exercise and strengthen our faith, to wean us from the world, to teach us a closer dependence upon himself, and to awaken our desires after a better inheritance.

Again, as God, by his promise freely to give us all things, has not engaged to comply with the measure of our unreasonable, short-sighted wishes; so, neither has he confined himself as to the time or manner of bestowing his gifts. The blessing we seek, though perhaps not wholly improper, may be at present unseasonable: in this case the Lord will suspend it till he sees it will afford us the comfort and satisfaction he intends us by it; and then we shall be sure to have it. Sometimes it is withheld to stir us up to fervency and importunity in our prayers, sometimes to make it doubly welcome and valuable when it comes. So, likewise, as to the manner. We ask one good thing, and he gives us an equivalent in something else; and when we come to weigh all

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things, we see cause to say his choice was best. Thus David acknowledges: 'In the day that I called, thou didst answer me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul,' Ps. cxxxviii. David asked for deliverance from trouble; the Lord gave him strength to bear it; and he allows his prayer was fully answered. A parallel case the apostle records: he besought the Lord thrice, 2 Cor xii. for the removal of that trial which he calls 'a thorn in the flesh;' the answer he received was, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' Such an assurance was more valuable than the deliverance he sought could be. Sometimes we seek a thing in a way of our own, by means and instruments of our own devising. God crosses our feeble purposes, that he may give us the pleasure of receiving it immediately from himself. It were easy to enlarge on this head: let it suffice to know, our concerns are in his hands who does 'all things well;' and who will, and does appoint 'all to work together for our good.

From the latter clause, thus limited and explained, many useful directions might be drawn. I shall only mention two or three, and conclude.

1st. Since we are told that God freely gives us all things, let us learn to see and acknowledge his hand in all we have, and in all we meet with. When Jacob was returning to Canaan, after a long absence, Gen. xxxii. the fear of his brother Esau occasioned him to divide his family and substance into separate companies; and, comparing his present situation with the poor condition in which he had been driven from home twenty years before, he breaks out into this act of praise, 'I am not worthy, O Lord, of all thy mercies; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands!' How pious and how cheering was this reflection! And afterwards, Gen. xxxiii. when his brother Esau asked him concerning his sons, 'They are the children (said he) which God has graciously given thy servant.' Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the Most High God, ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would, like the light, diffuse a lustre and a beauty upon every thing around us. To consider every comfort of life as an effect and proof of the divine favour towards us, would, like the feigned alchymist's stone, turn all our possessions to gold, and stamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge indifferent. Nor is this more than the truth: 'The hairs of our head are all numbered,' Matt. x. The eye of divine providence is upon every sparrow of the field; nor can we properly term any circumstance of our lives *small*, since such as seem most trifling in themselves do often give birth to those which we judge most important. On the other hand, to be able to discover the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly

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Father, through the darkest cloud of troubles and afflictions; to see all our trials appointed to us, in number, weight, and measure; nothing befalling us by chance, nothing without need, nothing without a support, nothing without a designed advantage: what a stay must these apprehensions be to the soul! Take away these, and man is the most forlorn, helpless, miserable object in the world; *pining* for every thing he has not, *trembling* for every thing he has; equally suffering under the pressure of what *does* happen, and the fear of what *may*; liable to thousands of unsuspected dangers, yet unable to guard against those which are most obvious. Were there no future life, it would be our interest to be truly and uniformly religious, in order to make the most of this. How unhappy must they be to whom the thoughts of a God ever present is a burden they strive, in vain, to shake off! But let us learn 'to acknowledge him in all our ways,' and then 'he will direct and bless our paths,' Prov. iii.

2d. Since all we have is the gift of God, let this teach us, 'in whatever state we are, therewith to be content.' 'Our heavenly Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask him,' Matt. vi. 'The earth is his, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. xxiv. and his goodness is equal to his power; a proof of which we have in the text. He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds. Are you poor? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to him to give you large estates, as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils; but he sees poverty best for you; he sees prosperity might prove your ruin; therefore he has appointed you the honour of being, in this respect, conformable to your Lord, who, when on earth, 'had not where to lay his head,' Matt. viii. Have any of you lost a dear friend or relative, in whose life you thought your own lives bound up? 'Be still, and know that he is God,' Ps. xlvi. It was he gave you that friend; his blessing made your friend a comfort to you; and though the stream is now cut off, the fountain is still full. Be not like a wild bull in a net; the Lord has many ways to turn your mourning into joy. Are any of you sick? Think how the compassionate Jesus healed diseases, with a word, in the days of his flesh. Has he not the same power now as then? Has he not the same love? Has he, in his exalted state, *forgot* his poor, languishing members here below? No, verily; he still retains his sympathy: 'he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities; he knows our frame; he remembers we are but dust,' Ps. ciii. It is because sickness is better for you than health, that he thus visits you. He dealt in the same manner with Lazarus, whom he loved, John xi. Resign yourselves, therefore, to his wisdom, and repose in his love. There is a land where the

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blessed inhabitant shall no more say, 'I am sick.' Isa. xxxiii. and there all that love the Lord Jesus' shall shortly be. Are any of you tempted? 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him,' James i. Sure you need no other argument to be content, or, shall I say, to rejoice and be exceeding glad? 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. Heb. xii. Be it in poverty or losses, in body or mind, in your own person or another's, it is all appointed by God, and shall issue in your great benefit, if you are of the number of those that love him.

3d. Once more: since it is said that all things are freely given us in and together with Christ, let us give all diligence to make OUR calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. 1. to know that we have an interest in him and his mediation; and then (if I may borrow a common expression) we are made for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ, sent from God on a merciful errand to a lost world, did not come empty: no, he is fraught with all blessings, suitable to all persons, extending to all times, enduring to all eternity. O! make it your great care to know him and to please him: study his word, call upon his name, frequent his ordinances, observe his sayings, seek to know him as the only *way* to God, John xiv. the way to pardon, peace, and divine communion here, and to complete happiness hereafter. When once you can say, 'My beloved is mine,' Sol. Song ii. I account all his interest my own, 'and I am his,' I have given myself up to him without reserve: you will, you *must* be happy. You will be interested in all his attributes and communicable perfections. His wisdom will be your high tower, his providence your constant shield, his love your continual solace. 'He will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.' Ps. lxxxi. In times of difficulty he will direct your counsels; in times of danger he will fill you with comfort, and 'keep' you 'in perfect peace,' Isa. xxvi. when others quake for fear. He will bless your basket and your store, your substance and your families: your days shall happily pass in doing your Father's will, and receiving renewed tokens of his favour; and at night you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. When afflictions befall you, (for these likewise are the fruits of love,) you shall see your God near at hand, 'a very present help in trouble,' Ps. xlvi. you shall find your strength increased in proportion to your trial; you shall in due time be restored, as gold from the furnace, purified seven-fold, to praise your great Deliverer. Every thing you meet in life shall yield you profit; and death, which puts a fatal period to the hope of the wicked;

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death, at whose name thousands turn pale, shall to you be an entrance into a new and endless life. He who tasted death *for* you, Heb. ii. and sanctified it to you, shall lead and support you through that dark valley: you shall shut your eyes upon the things of time, to open them, the next moment, in the blissful presence of your reconciled God. You, that a minute before was surrounded by weeping, helpless friends, shall, in an instant, be transported and inspired to join in that glorious song, 'To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and strength, for ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,' Rev. v. Thus 'blessed shall the man be that fears the Lord,' Ps. cxxviii. 'Thus shall it be done (Esth. vi.) to him whom the King delighteth to honour.' Amen.

SERMON V.

ON SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

THE phrase in the Greek is ambiguous; and may be either rendered, according to our reading, as a command, *search the Scriptures;* or else as simply affirming, *ye do search the Scriptures.* And as the words were spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were exceedingly studious in the letter of the Scriptures, this may, perhaps, have been their first design. The difference is not material; and either sense will afford us instruction. If we receive it as a command, we should consider it as given us by the Lord himself, whose disciples we profess to be; as bound on us by our own acknowledgement, since in them we think, and say, we have eternal life; and as absolutely necessary to be complied with, since it is these, and these only, testify of Christ, in the knowledge of whom our eternal life consists. If we should understand it in the latter sense, as spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, it may give us a useful caution not to lay too much stress either

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on what we think or on what we do. For these persons we find had, in some respects, a right sentiment of the holy Scriptures: they believed that in them there was eternal life: and, in a sense likewise, they made this an inducement to read, yea, to search them. but though they thus thought and thus acted; and though the Scriptures, from the first page to the last, do testify of Christ; yet they could not understand or receive this testimony, but rejected the Messiah whom they professed to hope for, and took all their pains in searching the Scriptures to no purpose.

In what I am about to lay before you, I propose the following order: 1st, To mention a few requisites, without which it is impossible rightly to understand the Scriptures: 2d, To show *how* the Scriptures testify of Christ: 3d, To consider what the import of their testimony is: 4th, To press the practice of searching the Scripture, from the argument used in the text, which is equally applicable to us as to the Jews of old, 'that in them we think we have eternal life.'

I. The first requisite I shall mention is *Sincerity:* I mean a real desire to be instructed by the Scripture, and to submit both our sentiments and our practices to be controlled and directed by what we read there. Without this, our reading and searching will only issue in our greater condemnation, and bring us under the heavy doom of the servant that knew his master's will and did it not. A remarkable instance of this we have in the 42d and two following chapters of Jeremiah. After the destruction of Jerusalem, and the death of Gedaliah, the people that were left entreated the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them, concerning their intended removal into Egypt. Their request was fair: 'That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.' Their engagement was very solemn: 'The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee.' But their hypocrisy was most detestable. The Lord, who seeth the inmost purposes of the soul, could not be put off with their fair pretences. He sent them, in answer, an express prohibition to go into Egypt; assuring them that his curse should follow them, and that there they should certainly perish. Yet they went, and verified what the prophet had told them: 'For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me to the Lord your God, saying, pray for us unto the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us and we will do it.' Then they spoke out, and, like themselves, when they

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told him, 'As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but we will certainly do whatever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth.' None of us dare speak thus in express terms: but if we bring our preconceived opinions or purposes, not in order to examine them strictly by the test of Scripture, but to find or wrest some passages in the word of God to countenance or justify ourselves; if our desire is not simply to be led in the very way of God's commandments; if we are not really willing to discover every error and evil that may be in us, in order to forsake them, we closely imitate these deceitful, obstinate, insolent Jews, be our pretences ever so fair; and are liable to the like dreadful judgment for our hypocrisy; the curse of God upon our devices here, and the portion of his enemies hereafter.

Where this sincerity is wanting, every thing is wrong; neither praying, nor hearing, nor reading, can profit. The Scripture abounds with the severest threatenings against those who presume to mock the all-seeing God. I shall only produce one passage from Ezekiel xiv. 5. 'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of iniquity before their faces: should I be inquired of at all by them? Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I, the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols.' I say not this that I would have any one throw aside the ordinances of God, especially his public worship. These are the means which God has appointed, in which he has commanded us to wait, and where he is often pleased to be found, even by those who seek him not. But I would entreat such persons seriously to consider the dreadful condition they would be in, if death should surprise them in such a state of insincerity as renders their very prayers and sacrifices 'an abomination to the Lord,' and perverts those things which are designed for their advantage into an occasion of their falling.

A second thing necessary is *Diligence*. This, with the former, is finely described in the book of Proverbs. 'My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandment within thee; so that thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God,' Prov. ii. The wisdom of God, in which we are concerned, is contained in his word. The best understanding is to keep his commandments,

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Psalm cxi. but we cannot keep them unless we know them, neither can we know them without a diligent inquiry. The word which is rendered *search* ερευναω, is borrowed from the practice of *miners:* it implies two things, to dig, and to examine. First, with much labour they pierce the earth to a considerable depth; and when they have thus found a vein of precious ore, they break and sift it, and suffer no part to escape their notice. Thus must we join frequent assiduous reading with close and awakened meditation; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, carefully taking notice of the circumstances, occasion, and application of what we read: being assured that there is a treasure of truth and happiness under our hands, if we have but skill to discover and improve it. Only let us be mindful that we have the same views in reading the Scripture that God has in revealing it to us; which the apostle thus enumerates: 'All Scripture,' or the whole Scripture, πασα γραφη, 'is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work,' 2 Tim. iii. And elsewhere it is said to be able to make us 'wise unto salvation.' How absurd would it be for a man to read a treatise of husbandry with a design of learning navigation, or to seek the principles of trade and commerce in an essay on music! No less absurd is it to read or study the Scriptures with any other view than to receive its doctrines, submit to its reproofs, and obey its precepts, that we may be made 'wise unto salvation.' All disquisitions and criticisms that stop short of this, that do not amend the heart as well as furnish the head, are empty and dangerous, at least to ourselves, whatever use they may be of to others. An experience of this caused a learned critic and eminent commentator (Grotius) to confess, towards the close of his life, *Vitam prorsus perdidi, laboriose nihil agendo!* Alas, I have wasted my life in much labour to no purpose! But, on the contrary, when we are diligent and studious, that we may be better acquainted with the divine precepts and promises, and better inclined to observe and trust them, then we may hope for happy success; for, 'blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night; for he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of waters, which bringeth forth its fruit in due season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth,' under this influence, 'shall prosper,' Psalm i. Thus God has promised, and thus many have found it, and been enabled to adopt the words of David, 'Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me: I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.' Ps. cxix.

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Humility is a third thing very necessary to a profitable perusal of the Scriptures. 'God giveth his grace to the humble,' James iv. 'He will guide the meek in judgment, he will enlighten the simple in his way,' Ps. xxv. The proud he resisteth, ἀντιτάσσεται he draws up against him, he prepares himself, as it were, with his whole force, to oppose his progress. A most formidable expression! If God only leaves us to ourselves, we are all ignorance and darkness; but what must be the dreadful case of those against whom he appears in arms! This has been a principal source of those various and opposite heresies and mistakes, which are the reproach of our holy profession, that vain man, though born a mere 'wild ass's colt,' Job xi. has undertaken, by his own strength and wisdom, to decide authoritatively on the meaning of Scripture; without being aware of the ignorance, prejudice, and weakness, which influence his judgment in religious matters; without knowing the utter inability of the natural man to discern the things of God, and without attending to those means the Scripture itself has appointed for the redress of these evils. But would we not lose our time and pains, would we wish not to be misled ourselves, or not to mislead others, let us aim at a humble spirit; let us reflect much on the majesty and grandeur of the God we serve: let us adore his condescension in favouring us with a revelation of his will; let us learn to consider the word of God, and the wisdom of God, as terms of the same import; in a word, let us study to know ourselves, our sinfulness and ignorance; then we shall no longer read the Scriptures with indifference or prepossession, but with the greatest reverence and attention, and with the most enlarged expectation.

I shall mention but one thing more upon this head, which is as necessary in itself as any of the preceding, and likewise necessary in order to obtain them, and that is *Prayer*. Sincerity, diligence, and humility, are the gifts of God; the blessing we seek in the exercise of them is in his hands; and he has promised to bestow all good things, even 'his Holy Spirit, upon those who ask him.' Prayer is, indeed, the best half of our business while upon earth, and that which gives spirit and efficacy to all the rest. Prayer is not only our immediate duty, but the highest dignity, the richest privilege we are capable of receiving on this side eternity; and the neglect of it *implies* the deepest guilt, and *includes* the heaviest punishment. A stranger to prayer is equally a stranger to God and to happiness, 'like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed,' James i. Are any of you, my friends, unacquainted with prayer? Then are you without God in the world, without a guide in prosperity, without resource in distress, without true comfort in life, and, while you continue so, without

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hope in death. But, especially, you are utterly unqualified to 'search the Scripture.' There is a veil upon the mind and heart of every man, (as the apostle assures us, 2 Cor. iii,) so that he can neither see nor embrace heavenly truths till this impediment is removed: the means of this is prayer. Therefore David says, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,' Ps. cxix. He knew there were wonderful things contained in the law, but confesses himself incapable of discerning them till the Lord should interpose. This he has promised to do in behalf of all who call upon him. But those who seek not assistance from God can find it no where else: for 'every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,' James i. who hath said, 'if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' A critical knowledge of the original languages, a skill in the customs and manners of the ancients, an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics, a perusal of councils, fathers, scholiasts, and commentators, a readiness in the subtleties of logical disputation; these, in their proper place and subserviency, may be of considerable use to clear, illustrate, or enforce the doctrines of Scripture: but unless they are governed by a temper of humility and prayer: unless the man that possesses them, accounts them altogether as nothing, without that assistance of the Spirit of God which is promised to guide believers into all truth; unless he seeks and prays for this guidance no less earnestly than those who understand nothing but their mother tongue; I make no scruple to affirm, that all his *apparatus* of knowledge only tends to lead him so much the further astray; and that a plain honest ploughman, who reads no book but his Bible, and has no teacher but the God to whom he prays in secret, stands abundantly fairer for the attainment of true skill in divinity. But happy he who, by faith and prayer, can realize the divine presence always with him! who is sincere in his intentions, diligent in the use of means, diffident of himself, yet full of trust and hope that God, whom he desires to serve, will lead and guide him in the paths of peace and righteousness for his mercy's sake, Psal. xxxi. Those things which are necessary for him to know, shall be made so plain that he shall not mistake them; and those things with which he is not so *immediately* concerned, shall at least teach him humility; teach him to adore the depths of divine wisdom, and to long for that hour, when 'all that is imperfect shall be done away; when we shall no more see in part, but shall know even as we are known.' 1 Cor. xiii.

II. I proceed to the *second* thing proposed. To show *how* the Scriptures testify of Christ. In general, it may be said that he is the main design and subject, both of the whole Scripture, and of

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each particular book. This will be easily allowed of the New Testament, but is not so obvious with regard to several parts of the Old: I hope, therefore, it will not be unacceptable to those who love the word of God, if I consider this point something at large, and help them to discover the Lord Jesus Christ in almost every page of the Bible. This will be a new inducement to them to search the Scriptures, when they shall perceive that many passages which they were accustomed to read with indifference, as hardly able to discern any wisdom or meaning in them, do directly testify of Christ.

What is expressed in the Old Testament (for of this I am now to speak) concerning Christ, may be reduced to three heads; prophecies, types, and ceremonies. To open and trace these in their proper extent, would require volumes; but it is only a hint of each that the bounds of our present meeting will permit me to offer.

The first glimmering of light which dawned upon a lost world was that promise (for I consider the promises as a branch of prophecy) which God (who, in the midst of 'judgment remembers mercy') made to the woman, that 'her seed should bruise the serpent's head,' Gen. iii. This was absolute and general, giving hopes of a recovery, but no information of person, time, or place; but the path of 'this just one was as the light which shineth more and more to the perfect day,' Prov. iv. In the time of Noah, the hope and desire of all nations was restrained to the line of Shem, Gen. ix. and afterwards, more expressly to the family of Abraham; when this divided into two branches, God, to show that his purpose is of himself, and that he will do as pleaseth him with his own, set aside the elder, and confirmed to Jacob, the younger, 'that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed,' Gen. xxviii. Jacob had twelve sons, which made a still more explicit restriction necessary: accordingly the Patriarch, before his death, declared this high privilege of perpetuating the line of the Messiah was fixed in the tribe of Judah, Gen. xlix. and the time of his advent was obscurely marked out by the promise, 'that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till the Shiloh come.' The last personal limitation was to David, 1 Chron. xvii. that of *his* family God would raise up the King who should reign for ever, and over all. Succeeding prophets gradually foretold the time, place, and circumstances of his birth, the actions of his life, the tenor of his doctrine, the success he met with, and the cause, design, and manner of his sufferings and death; in short, to almost every thing that we read in the Gospel, we may annex the observation that the evangelists have made upon a few instances, (in order, as it may be presumed, to direct us in searching

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out the rest,) 'then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophets.' From them we learn that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, in Bethlehem of Judah, four hundred and ninety years after the commandment given to rebuild Jerusalem; that he should begin his ministry in Galilee; that he should be despised and rejected of men, betrayed by one of his disciples, sold for thirty pieces of silver, with which money the Potter's field should be afterwards purchased: 'that he should be cut off, but not for himself;' and that his death should be followed by the sudden and total ruin of the Jewish government. To compare these promises and prophecies among themselves, and with their exact accomplishment recorded in the New Testament, this alone would engage us in a close and profitable search into the Scriptures, and would afford us the most convincing proofs of their divine original and excellence.

The types of Christ in the Old Testament may be considered as twofold, personal and relative: the former describing, under the vail of history, his character and offices as considered in himself; the latter teaching, under a variety of metaphors, the advantages those who believe in him should receive from him. Thus Adam, Enoch, Melchizedec, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Sampson, David, Solomon, and others, were, in different respects, types or figures of Christ. Some more immediately represented his person: others prefigured his humiliation; others referred to his exaltation, dominion, and glory. So, in the latter sense, the ark of Noah, the rainbow, the manna, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, were so many emblems pointing out the nature, necessity, means, and security of that salvation which the Messiah was to establish for his people. Nor are these fanciful allusions of our own making, but warranted and taught in Scripture, and easily proved from thence, would time permit; for, indeed, there is not one of these persons or things which I have named but would furnish matter for a long discourse, if closely considered in this view, as typical of the promised Redeemer.

The like may be said of the Levitical ceremonies. The law of Moses is, in this sense, a happy school-master to lead us unto Christ, Gal. iii. and it may be proved beyond contradiction, that in these the Gospel was preached of old to all those *Israelites indeed*, whose hearts were right with God, and whose understandings were enlightened by his Spirit. The ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, the tabernacle, the incense, the altar, the offerings, the high priest with his ornaments and garments, the laws relating to the leprosy, the Nazarite, and the redemption of lands; all these, and many more which I have not time to mention, had

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a deep and important meaning beyond their outward appearance; each, in their place, pointed to 'the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world,' John i. derived their efficacy *from him*, and received their full accomplishment *in him*.

Thus the Old and New Testament do mutually illustrate each other; nor can either be well understood singly. The Old Testament, in histories, types, prophecies, and ceremonies, strongly delineate Him who, in the fulness of time, was to come into the world to effect a reconciliation between God and man. The New Testament shows that all these characters and circumstances were actually fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; that it was he of whom 'Moses in the law and the prophets did write;' and that we are not to look for another.

We read in Genesis, chap. xxi. that Abraham had two sons; Issac, the child of the promise, the son of his old age, by his wife Sarah; and Ishmael, born some years before of Hagar, the handmaid and servant of Sarah: that the latter, with his mother, were cast out of the family: the occasion some would think trivial, the anger and jealously of Sarah, because Ishmael had mocked her son. But when it was grievous to Abraham to put them away upon so slight a ground, God himself interposed, and commanded him to comply with her desire. Had we heard no more of this, it is likely we should have considered it as a piece of *family history*, of no very great importance but to those who were immediately concerned in it. We should, perhaps, have wondered to find so much said upon such a subject, in a book which we profess to believe was written by divine inspiration; we should, probably, have presumed to arraign the divine wisdom, in descending to particulars, in which, according to our views of the fitness of things, we could discern nothing either interesting or instructive. To guard us from these rash mistakes, to explain the true meaning of this particular transaction, and at the same time to furnish us with a key for understanding many passages of the like nature, in which *human wisdom* can discover neither beauty nor benefit; it has pleased God to favour us with an *infallible* exposition of the whole matter. Not for the sake of Abraham, or Isaac, or Ishmael, or Hagar, was this recorded, much less merely to gratify our curiosity. No: 'These things,' saith the apostle Paul, 'are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.——Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted

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him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free;' Gal. iv. I must not detain you by showing at large how the apostle teaches us to discover the spirit and privileges of the Gospel, together with what all who truly receive it must expect to encounter, in a passage which we might otherwise have thought superfluous, if not impertinent. Keep this in your mind when you read the Scriptures. Assure yourselves, that there is nothing vain or useless in the *word of God*. Compare one place with another, the Law with the Gospel, the prophets with the evangelists: pray unto God that he would open your understandings to understand the Scriptures, as he did for the disciples, Luke xxiv. and in a little time you will find that Christ is not only spoken of in a few verses, here and there, but that, as I said before, he is the main scope and subject of every book, and *almost* of every chapter.

I would add an instance or two of the meaning of the ceremonies, to what I have observed of Hagar in reference to the types. In the law of the passover, it was especially enjoined, Exod. xii. that not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken. Now who would have thought that this referred to Christ? yet we see the evangelist expressly applies it to him, and is filled with wonder at the accomplishment. The legs of those who were crucified at the same time were purposely broken, John xix. but our Lord was passed by; and that it should be so, was intimated near fifteen hundred years before, in this charge concerning the lamb. Again, we find that in several places, where a bullock was commanded to be slain for a sin offering, it is enjoined, that the flesh and the skin should be burnt without the camp; and from the espistle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. we learn, that this was not a slight or arbitrary circumstance. We have there this explication: 'For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest, for sin, were burnt without the camp: wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach.' I must not enlarge any further, or it were easy, by the clue the apostles in their writings have given us, to trace the important meaning of many of those institutions which *scoffers*, who are wise in their own conceits, though neither acquainted with themselves nor the subject, presume to censure as frivolous. The sense of the sacred writings lies too deep for a captious, superficial, volatile survey; it must be

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a search, a scrutiny; a humble, diligent, sincere, and persevering inquiry, or no satisfaction can be expected.

The import of the Scripture-testimony concerning Christ, which was the third thing I proposed to speak of, must be deferred to another opportunity. I hope what has been already said may, through the divine blessing, engage you 'to search the Scriptures.' Remember it is the command of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the only appointed way to the knowledge of him, whom to know, so as to love, serve, and to obey him, is both the foundation and the sum of our happiness here and hereafter. We, as well as the Jews, think we have eternal life in the Scripture, and shall, like them, be inexcusable and self-condemned if we neglect it. Let us not be like fools, with a prize, an inestimable prize in our hands, but without heart or skill to use it. Better it would have been for us to have lived and died in the wilds of America, without either means of grace or hopes of glory, than to slight this record which God has been pleased to give us of his Son. But happy the man whose delight is in the law of his God! He has sure direction in every difficulty, certain comfort in every distress. The beauty of the precepts are preferable in his eye to 'thousands of gold and silver,' Ps. cxix. The comforts of the promises are *sweeter* to his taste, 'than honey or the honey-comb,' Ps. xix. He is happy in life; for the word of God is to him as a 'fountain of living water.' He shall be happy in death; the promises of his God shall support him through that dark valley; and he shall be happy for ever in the presence and love of him for whose sake he now searches the Scripture: 'whom having not seen,' 1 Pet. i. yet, from the testimony there given of him, 'he loves; in whom, though now he sees him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

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Pleraque autem, (si detur liberè loquendi venia,) quæ etiam in Thologicis scholis tractantur, et magno cum apparatu et strepitu docentur et disputantur, spinosum fortè acumen habent, sed simul certè spinosam sterilitatem: lacerare et pungere possunt, animos pascere non possunt: 'Nemo enim ex spinis uvas colligit unquam, aut ex tribulis ficus.' 'Quorsum alta, (inquit quidam,) de Trinitate disputare, si careas, humilitate, et sic Trinitati displiceas?' Et aptè St. Augustinus ad illud Esaiæ, 'Ego Deus tuus docens te utilia;' '*utilia*, (inquit,) *docens*, non *subtilia*.' Et hoc est quod opto et oro; ut nobis pro modulo nostro subdocentibus, ille efficaciter vos perdoceat, qui cathedram in cœlo habens, corda docet in *erris.—Archiep. Leighton. Prælect. Theol. pag.* 4. *edit. Lond.* 1693. 4*to.*

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SERMON VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

IN a former discourse on these words, I mentioned four things as highly requisite, if we would acquire a useful knowledge of the Scripture; sincerity with respect to the end, diligence in the use of means, a humble sense of our own weakness, and earnest prayer to God for the assistance of his grace and Spirit. To engage us to this practice, and perseverance therein, I next considered *how* the Scriptures, when properly searched into and compared, do clearly, and in every part, testify of Christ, that he is the end of the law, the sum of the prophets, the completion of the promises, the scope of the types and ceremonies, and the great object of the whole Old Testament dispensation. I am now to say something to the third point I proposed:

III. Concerning the *import* of the testimony the Scriptures bear to Christ.

The principal difficulties on this head are, where to begin on a subject absolutely boundless; and what to select that may be most suitable and useful to this assembly, from the immense variety of topics that offer. For this being the great end and design of the Scripture, to proclaim the excellency of Christ Jesus our Lord, 'that we, through him may have strong consolation,' Heb. xii. it is inculcated in so many places, set in such a diversity of views, and couched under such deep and comprehensive expressions, that not only our present opportunity, but my whole future life, would be too short, if I would collect, state, and explain all that properly belongs to this single article. For order's sake, I shall reduce the little I must say at this time to three or four distinct particulars, what the Scripture testifies of Christ, as to his person, his offices, his power, and his love.

When we hear of some great undertaking to be performed, we inquire, of course, about the person who is chiefly concerned in it; so, when we are told of the mighty works Jesus Christ engaged to perform, to redeem a lost world, to satisfy divine justice, to make an end of sin, to abolish death, and to bring life and

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immortality to light; the first question that occurs is, Who is he? 'Search the Scriptures,' and you will have a clear and decisive answer. The prophet Isaiah, *rapt into future times*, describes him thus: 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,' Isa. ix. 6. The union of the divine and human natures in the Messiah is so strongly asserted, the names and attributes of God are so clearly ascribed, in this passage, to one who should be *born* into the world, that 'he who runs may read; the wayfaring man, though a fool,' must understand it; and it requires a considerable share of unhappy ingenuity to wrest the words to any other than their obvious meaning. This text, if it stood alone in the Bible, (supposing the Scriptures to be a revelation from God,) would be a full warrant, and a firm foundation, for that great point of Christian faith and doctrine, That Jesus Christ is very God, and very man; or, as the apostle better expresses it, 'God manifest in the flesh.' But it is not alone: on the contrary, the Messiah is seldom mentioned but something is either said of him, or referred to him, which teaches us the same important truth. 'Behold the days come, (saith the Lord by Jeremiah, chap. xxiii.) that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' Isaiah, in general, styles him 'A child to be born;' Jeremiah more particularly, 'A branch of David.' Isaiah ascribes to him the name of 'The Mighty God;' Jeremiah says, he shall be called, 'The Lord our Righteousness.' You have the word LORD in capital letters here, as in other places where it is in the original JEHOVAH. Some of the names of God are occasionally applied to inferior subjects, to angels, to magistrates, and sometimes to idols. But *Jehovah* is allowed by all to signify the essential and incommunicable name of the Most High God. Yet this is not the only place where it is expressly and directly applied to the Messiah. David himself speaks to the same purpose: 'The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand,' Ps. cx. That the Messiah was to be David's son, was known and acknowledged by the Jews in our Saviour's time; but how he could be the Son of David, and yet his Lord, was a difficulty that utterly posed and silenced the most learned Rabbies and Scribes among them; because, being destitute of that sincerity and humility we have before spoken of, they could not understand the Scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every day.

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Now, although this important doctrine was not to be discovered by the light of nature, or the powers of human reason, yet, since it has pleased God to make it known to us, our reason, humbly tracing the steps of divine revelation, can easily prove the expedience, and even the necessity, that it should be so. When we are informed from Scripture, that all mankind being sunk into a state of sin and misery, God had, in great mercy, appointed a person to atone for the one, and deliver them from the other; we may safely, from these principles, infer, by our own reason, 1st, That this person cannot be *mere man:* for as the whole human race, and consequently every individual, is supposed to be previously involved in the same circumstances of guilt and condemnation, it is impossible that any one of these should be able either to answer or satisfy for himself, much less be qualified to interpose in behalf of another. From hence reason may ascend a step higher, and conclude, 2d, That no *mere creature,* however great and excellent, can undertake this part: for the two great points necessary in order to our redemption, to satisfy the justice of God, and to restore the divine image in man, are either of them beyond the sphere of finite power. We read in the Scripture of angels, archangels, thrones, principalities, and powers; and from several texts we may collect, that their number and excellences are beyond any competitions we can form. Could we suppose that the virtues and endowments of all these various and exalted beings were united and centered in one of them; however glorious this being would be in other respects, when we consider him as a creature of the divine power, he will be found to be as *unfit,* and as *unable,* to interfere in the behalf of sinful man, as the meanest worm that crawls upon the earth. It is the duty of every being, great and small, to be entirely devoted, according to the extent of its capacity, to the service and glory of its great Creator; therefore, an angel is no more capable than a man of performing the smallest work of supererogation. The highest archangel could not magnify the law of God, and make it honourable on the behalf of man, being already bound thereto for himself: much less can we suppose such a being capable of expiating the sins of mankind by suffering. If divine justice insisted on a propitiation, it must follow, that nothing less than an equivalent could be accepted. But what would be the temporary sufferings of a creature, *or of all creatures,* in this view? A finite satisfaction, however heightened and exaggerated, would at last be infinitely short of the demand. As to the other branch of redemption, the restoration of the image of God in the soul, I need only mention it; for it appears, at first glance, that this must be the prerogative of divine power alone to effect. It re-

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mains, therefore, that the deliverance of mankind could be attempted only by him, who, we are assured by the apostle, agreeable to the passages already cited, is over all, God blessed for ever.

That the Son of God should take upon him the nature and circumstances of our humanity, sin excepted, in order to atone for our transgressions, is indeed such an instance of condescension and love, as must for ever dazzle and astonish the brightest understandings. It is true, some persons, in these refined times, affect to speak of this point with admirable coolness and precision. *But in the beginning it was not so.* Either the apostle Paul was less master of his temper, or more unequal to sublime speculations, than these gentlemen, or else we must allow he had a very different view of the subject; for he cannot mention it without appearing to be transported, and, (if I may use the expression,) swallowed up by the thought: his ideas seem too great for words; and it is well if his best attempts to explain himself have not exposed him, in the judgment of some of his readers, to the charge of *solecism*. However, though this doctrine, above any other, is a proof that God 'is able to do for us exceeding abundantly beyond all we could ask or think,' it is not, upon the premises I before mentioned, in the least repugnant to right reason; rather it is exactly calculated to remove all those surmises which would arise in the mind of a *reasonable sinner*, upon the first intimation of possible forgiveness. In our nature Christ fulfilled the law which we had broken; he sustained the penalty we had incurred; he vanquished the enemies we had to encounter; he trod the path which he has marked out for us; he is entered in our name into that heaven he has promised us; and retains a sympathy with us in all our sufferings and temptations, 'in as much as he himself has suffered, being tempted,' Heb. ii.

I am next to consider the testimony of Scripture concerning the offices of Christ. These are, in general, included in the character of Mediator. 'There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,' 1 Tim. ii. In this word is summed up all that Christ has done, now does, or will do hereafter, either on the part of God or man. But, for our better apprehension, it is proposed to us under three distinct and principal views, answerable to the three particulars in which the misery of fallen man does principally consist.

And first, Man having departed from God, 'became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart was darkened,' Rom. i. so that he totally lost the knowledge of his Creator, and how entirely his happiness depended thereon. He forgot God and himself, and sunk so low as to worship the work of his own hands. His

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life became vain and miserable; in prosperity, without security or satisfaction; in adversity, without support or resource; his death dark and hopeless; no pleasing reflection on the past, no ray of light on the future. Such was the unhappy case when Christ undertook the office of a prophet; in which character, under various dispensations, first by his servants inspired of old, and afterwards more clearly in his own person, and by his apostles, he has instructed us in the things pertaining to our peace; not only renewing in us the knowledge of the true God, which, where revelation prevailed not, was universally lost out of the world, but disclosing to us the counsels of divine love and wisdom in our favour, those great things 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' and which never could have entered 'into the heart of man to conceive' had not he who dwelt in the bosom of the Father declared them to us. We can now give a sufficient answer to that question, which must have for ever overwhelmed every serious, awakened mind, 'Wherewithal shall I appear before the most high God,' Mic. vi. We have now learnt how God can declare and illustrate his righteousness and truth, by that very act, which, without respect to satisfaction given, would seem the highest impeachment of both, I mean his justifying the ungodly. We have now a *glass* by which we can discover the presence of the Creator in every part of his creation, and a *clue* to lead us through the mysterious mazes of divine providence. But who can enumerate the various, the important, the interesting lessons we receive from this Heavenly Teacher, when, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, he powerfully applies his written word to the hearts of his real disciples, who *search the Scriptures* with a sincere desire to be made wise unto salvation! Whatever is necessary to make life useful and comfortable, and to gild the gloom of death with the bright prospect of a glorious immortality, is there contained: so that, instructed by these writings alone, a poor illiterate mechanic has been often enabled to converse upon a dying bed with more dignity, certainty, and influence, than any or all the philosophers, ancient or modern, could attain.

But, besides the natural ignorance of fallen man, he was chargeable with aggravated *guilt*. Guilt and ignorance are reciprocally causes and consequences of each other. Every additional guilt tends to increase the stupidity of the human soul; and every increase of this, increases, in the same proportion, the natural indisposition for the practice or the love of virtue, makes the soul more blind to consequences, more base in its pursuits, and thus become a more willing and assiduous servant of iniquity. No wonder, therefore, that when the understanding was totally darkened as to the *knowledge* of God, the will and affections became

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wholly disobedient to his *law*. But when a divine light has, in some measure, discovered the heart to itself, and at the same time set an offended God in view, every such sensible sinner would undoubtedly imitate our first parents, and fly (were it possible) from the presence of his Maker and his Judge. 'I heard thy voice,' says Adam, 'and I hid myself, for I was afraid,' Gen. iii. Vain attempt; and if it was practicable, a dreadful alternative, since absence from God imports the utmost misery to a creature who can be happy only in his favour. But here the Scriptures bring us unspeakable comfort, testifying of Christ as our great High Priest. To point out and illustrate this part of his character, is the chief end and design of the whole Levitical law; the main points of which are explained, and applied to our blessed Lord throughout the epistle to the Hebrews. The principal parts of the priest's office were, to sacrifice in behalf of the people, to make atonement, to pray for them, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. No sacrifices could be offered or accepted; no blessings expected, but through the hands of the priests whom God had appointed. Thus Christ, the High Priest of our profession, offered himself a sacrifice without either spot or blemish: he entered, with his own blood, within the vail, to the immediate presence of our offended God; and through him peace and goodwill is proclaimed to sinful men. He continues still to exercise the other part of his appointment; he makes continual intercession for his people; he presents their prayers and imperfect services acceptable before the throne; he gives them confidence and access to draw nigh to God: and he bestows upon them those gifts and blessings which are the fruits of his sufferings and obedience. The Levitical priests were, like their people, sinners; and were therefore constrained first to make atonement for themselves; they were mortal, therefore their service passed from hand to hand; their sacrifices were imperfect, therefore needed continual repetition, and had at last only a typical and ceremonial efficacy; 'for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats' Heb, ix. and x. could remove either the guilt or pollution of sin. 'The law made nothing perfect.' But Jesus, the 'Mediator of the new covenant,' is 'such a high priest as became us; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needeth not (as those of old) to offer sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people; for this he did once, when he offered up himself,' Heb. viii. The great inference from this doctrine, several times repeated by the apostle in a variety of phrase, is, that we may now have boldness to appear before God, that our prayers and services are pleasing in his sight, and all the blessings of grace

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and glory ready to be bestowed on us, if we faithfully apply for them, through the merits of his Son.

Once more: Man is not only ignorant of God and himself, and too full of guilt to plead in his own name, but he is likewise weak and defenceless: unable to make his way through the opposition that withstands his progress to eternal life, or to secure him from the many enemies 'that rise up against him,' Psalm iii. We read that when the Gibeonites made a league with Joshua, Josh. ix. which was the only step could save them from utter ruin, the neighbouring states and cities all united to destroy them; so the soul that is desirous to submit to Jesus Christ, immediately finds itself in the midst of war: the world, the flesh, and the devil, unite their forces, either to recall such a one to the practice and service of sin, or to distress him to the uttermost for forsaking it. And none could support this conflict, if not themselves supported by a higher hand. But Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, the true Captain of the Lord's hosts, reveals himself in his word as the King of his Church. He can inspire the fainting soul with unseen supplies: he, 'when the enemy comes in like a flood,' Isa. lix. can, by his Spirit lift up a standard against him; he can take the prey even out of the hand of the mighty. He has said it of his church in general, and he will make it good to every individual that trusts in him, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them. What though a sense of the guilt and remaining power of sin often fills the humble soul with inexpressible distress! He that stills the raging of the sea and the violence of the winds with a word, can, with equal ease, calm all the unruly motions of the mind. What though the world opposes in every quarter, and presents snares or terrors all around! what though rage or contempt, threats or allurements, are by turns, or all together, employed to ruin us! Behold, 'greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world,' 1 John iv. Christ has 'overcome the world for us,' John xvi. and has promised to make us conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, in our turn. What though 'the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour!' 1 Pet. iv. It is an argument of the strongest kind for watchfulness and prayer; but we need not fear him: the 'beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety,' Deut. xxxiii. 'the Lord shall cover him all the day long; he shall deliver him from the snare of the fowler,' Ps. xci. 'His truth shall be a shield and buckler' to all who enlist under his banner; and at length, yea shortly, 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet,' Rom. xvi.

It is thus the Scriptures, to help the weakness of our apprehensions, testify of Christ, under the threefold view of Prophet, Priest, and King of his people. These are his principal and

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leading characters, which include and imply the rest; for the time would fail to speak of him, as he is declared to be their head, husband, root, foundation, sun, shield, shepherd, lawgiver, exemplar, and fore-runner. In brief, there is hardly any comfortable relation or useful office amongst men; hardly any object in the visible creation, which either displays beauty, or produces benefit, but what is applied in the word of God, to illustrate the excellence and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The intent of all is, that we may learn to trust him, and delight to serve him; for these must go together. Whoever would be benefitted by his mediation as a priest, must submit to his instructions as a prophet, and yield him universal obedience as a king. Fatal are the mistakes in this matter now in the world. Some talk highly of the death and sufferings of Christ, who are little solicitous to keep his commandments; others labour in the very fire to observe his law; but 'being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own,' Rom. x. they labour to no purpose. Dependence on the merits of Christ, and obedience to his commands, are inseparably united; and only the man who aims at *both*, can attain to *either*.

I should now lay before you some scripture-testimonies of the *power* and *love of Christ;* but I have anticipated this part of my subject in what I have already said. His divine nature proclaims his power, his offices display his love. We have seen that *he emptied himself* of his eternal glories; that 'he bowed the heavens, and came down in the form of a servant;' that he submitted to all imaginable sufferings; all that the malice of men, all that the avenging justice of God could inflict: and having by this means opened the kingdom of heaven, and taken possession there, in behalf of all believers, he has caused the glad tidings of salvation to be published through the world, declaring, that 'whosoever cometh to him, (without one exception,) he will in no wise cast out,' John vi. Are not these proofs of unspeakable, unexampled love? We have seen that he fully performed the work he undertook; 'that he has made an end of sin,' Dan. ix. 'brought in an everlasting righteousness, spoiled principalities and powers,' Eph. ii.; 'triumphed over all our enemies, broke down the partition-wall, and brought life and immortality to light by his Gospel,' 1 Tim. i. We read, that he is exalted highly; that 'God has given him a name that is above every name,' Phil. ii. that he is 'far above all principality, and might, and dominion:' and what more can be said of his power? Read his own declaration, 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth,' Matt. xxviii. Were these two points, the power and the love of Christ, rightly understood, and fully believed, earth would be full of heaven.

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But, alas! we are *fools, and slow of heart*, to receive all that *Moses and the prophets*, Luke xxiv. the *evaagelists and apostles*, have wrote for our instruction. From hence proceeds our indifference, and that we need so much to be pressed *to search the Scriptures*, though we readily acknowledge that in them we *have the words of eternal life*.

IV. It remains, therefore, in the fourth and last place, that I add a few words to recommend and enforce the command in the text, 'search the Scriptures,' from the argument there subjoined, 'for in them ye think ye have eternal life;' and we think right; for it 'is eternal life to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent,' John xvii. and every article of this knowledge is contained in the Old and New Testament; nor can any part of it be met with any where else. Yet let conscience judge this day, as in the presence of 'the living God, the searcher of hearts,' before whom our private judgments must shortly come under a review: has any book a smaller share of the time, the memory, or the affections of many of us than this book of God? Do not the successive returns of business and amusement so far engross our time and our thoughts, that we have either no leisure or no disposition to attend to the things which pertain to our peace? Consider, 'in them we think we have eternal life.' We know we are posting to eternity as fast as the wings of time can carry us; we know that the consequences of our behaviour in this span of life will attend us into an invisible, unalterable state; and we confess that the necessary directions for our conduct in these most important and precarious circumstances, are to be found only in the Bible: what words, then, can describe our fatal insensibility, if, all this acknowledged, we have no heart to consult or to value this inestimable treasure put into our hands?

Many inquiries, more curious than useful, have been started concerning the divine procedure with the Heathen nations, and those who never heard the Gospel of peace. 'The Judge of all the earth will (undoubtedly) do right,' Gen. xviii. and will be justified at the great day, when every man shall receive according to his works. Till then we must *wait* for the knowlege of what he has not seen fit to reveal. But thus much he has already told us, that, however it may go with those who know not the Gospel, dreadful will be the doom of those who, having it published among them, refuse to obey it. 'The servant who knew not his master's will, shall be beaten with few stripes,' Luke xii. But this will not be our case; at least our ignorance will be rather an aggravation than an excuse: a wilful, obstinate, infatuated ignorance. We have the words of

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eternal life in our hands, 'line upon line, precept upon precept;' but how do we imitate those (whom perhaps we have been ready to blame) spoken of in the parable, who, when they received a kind and gracious invitation to a royal feast, made light of it, and 'all with one consent began to make excuse!' Luke xvi. It is easy to apply this to the Jews of old: so David could clearly judge in the case of the rich man who killed his poor neighbour's lamb, 2 Sam. xii. but had not the prophet helped him, he would not have collected that he himself was the person intended. But to bring the general truths of Scripture home to the heart is the work of God; and perhaps while I am speaking at random, he may rouse the consciences of some to say in particular, *Thou art the man.* Then they will soon see how much it behooves them to *search the Scriptures*, when they understand the weighty meaning of the words, *eternal life.*

Some of us, I hope, do already make conscience of frequent reading the Scriptures; but let us remember the force of the word *search.* It is not a careless superficial reading, or dispatching such a number of chapters in a day, as a task, that will answer the end. I have already reminded you that it is a business will need your best application; a serious, impartial, humble, persevering inquiry, accompanied with earnest prayer for the light and assistance of God's Holy Spirit. When we set about it in this method, we shall soon find happy effects; pleasure and instruction will go hand in hand; and our knowledge advance as the growing light. The precepts shall inspire us with true wisdom; teach us how to order all our affairs respecting both worlds, to fill up our several stations in life with propriety, usefulness, and comfort; and to avoid the numerous evils and distresses which those who live by no rule, or by any other rule than God's word, are perpetually running into. The *promises* shall be a support in every trouble, a medicine in every sickness, a supply in every need. Above all, the Scriptures will repay our trouble, as they testify of Christ. The more we read of his person, offices, power, love, doctrine, life, and death, the more our hearts will cleave to him: we shall by insensible degrees, be transformed into his Spirit. We shall, with the apostle, say, 'I know in whom I have believed,' 2 Tim. i. Every thing we see shall be at once a *memorial* to remind us of our Redeemer, and a *motive* to animate us in his service. And at length we shall be removed to see him as he is, without a cloud, and without a vail; to be for ever with him: to behold and share the glories of that heavenly kingdom 'which (Matt. xxv.) he has prepared (for his followers) from before the foundation of the world.' Amen.

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SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,

IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS.

1. The small Success of the Gospel Ministry.
2. The Mysteries of the Gospel hid from many.
3. Of those from whom the Gospel Doctrines are hid.
4. The Nature of Spiritual Revelation, and who are favoured with it.
5. The Sovereignty of Divine Grace asserted and illustrated.
6. Of the Person of Christ.
7. Of the authority of Christ.
8. The Glory and Grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ.
9. Labouring and heavy-laden Sinners described.
10. Of coming to Christ.
11. Of Believers' rest in Christ.
12. Of the Yoke of Christ.
13. The Service of Christ easy and pleasant.
14. Believers cautioned against Misconduct in their Profession.
15. The Extent and Sanction of the third Commandment.
16. The Christian Life compared to a Race.
17. No access to God but by the Gospel of Christ.
18. Of a Living and a Dead Faith.
19. Guilt removed, and Peace restored.
20. Of the Assurance of Faith.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16.

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TO THE

INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF OLNEY.

My Dear Friends,

I have principally two motives for publishing these Discourses. The one is, to exhibit a specimen of the doctrine that is taught and most surely believed amongst us, to satisfy those who desire information, and to stop, if possible, the mouth of slander. I cheerfully submit them to examination, in full confidence that they contain nothing of moment which is not agreeable to the general strain of the word of God, and to the principles of the Church whereof I am a minister, as specified in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies. And that what I now print is to the same purport with the usual course of my preaching, I doubt not but all who statedly hear me will do me the justice to acknowledge.

My other motive is a desire of promoting your edification. It is my comfort that many of you live by the truths of the Gospel, and highly prize them. You will not, therefore, be unwilling to view the substance of what you once heard with acceptance. But it is to be feared that the far greater part of the congregation have need to have the things pertaining to their peace pressed upon them, again and again, for a different reason; not because they know them, and, therefore, love to have them brought to their remembrance, but because they have hitherto heard them without effect. For the sake of both, therefore, I am willing to leave an abiding testimony amongst you. I hereby take each of your consciences to witness that I am clear of your blood; and that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

In the choice of the subjects I have selected for publication, I have not been solicitous to comprise a succinct scheme of Gospel doctrine, but have given the preference to such topics, which the peculiar circumstances of the times, and of my hearers, make me desirous might be had in continual remembrance.

The Exposition of the Third Commandment, which was first delivered in your hearing, I afterwards preached (nearer the form in which it now appears) at London; and, as it led me to touch on some particulars of a

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very public and interesting concern, I have given it a place in this volume. And I shall think myself happy indeed, if it may please God to give weight to the testimony of so obscure a person, with respect to a grievance under which the nation groans.

As long discourses are, in many respects, inconvenient, I have chosen to publish no more than a brief summary of what you heard, more at large, from the pulpit. And, as I aim to speak plain truths to a plain people, I have purposely avoided any studied ornaments in point of expression, being desirous to accommodate myself to the apprehensions of the most ignorant.

May it please the God of all grace to accompany my feeble endeavours to promote the knowledge of his truth, with the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit. And I earnestly entreat all who know how to draw near to a throne of grace by Jesus Christ, to strive mightily in prayer for me, that I may stand fast in the faith, and increase in the knowledge of Jesus the Saviour: and that, for his sake, I may labour, without fear or fainting, in the service to which he has been pleased to call me. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

I am your affectionate friend and servant in the Gospel of Christ,

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Jan. 20, 1767.

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SERMONS

PREACHED AT OLNEY.

SERMON I.

THE SMALL SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY CONSIDERED.

MATT. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

OUR blessed Lord perfectly knew before-hand the persons who would profit by his ministry: but his observations, conduct, and discourses, were intended as a pattern and instruction to his followers. He is said to have marvelled at the unbelief of some, and at the faith of others; not as though either was strange to him, who was acquainted with all hearts, and always knew what he himself would do; but it is spoken of him as a man, and to show how his ministers and people should be affected upon the like occasions. In the preceding verses he had been speaking of Capernaum, and other places, where his mighty works have been performed in vain. He had denounced a sentence against them; and foretold that their punishment would be heavier in proportion to the greatness of the privileges they had abused. But this was not his pleasing work. Mercy and grace were his delight, and he usually expressed sorrow and pain for the obstinacy of sinners. He wept for his avowed enemies, and prayed for the murderers who nailed him to the cross. It was not without grief that he declared the approaching doom of these cities; yet, raising his thoughts from earth to heaven, he acquiesced in the will of his heavenly Father, and expressed the highest satisfaction in his appointment. He knew that, however some would harden themselves, there was a remnant who would receive the truth, and that the riches and glory of the divine sovereignty and grace would be magnified. Before I enter upon the particulars, this connexion of the words will afford us ground for some observations.

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I. That the small success and efficacy of the preached Gospel upon multitudes who hear it, is a subject of wonder and grief to the ministers and people of God. It was so to our Lord Jesus, considered as a preacher and messenger; and they, so far as they have received his Spirit, judge and act as he did.

1. Those who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, have had such a powerful experience in their own souls of the necessity and value of the Gospel, that in their first warmth, and till painful experience has convinced them of the contrary, they can hardly think it possible that sinners should stand out against its evidence. They are ready to say, 'Surely it is because they are ignorant; they have not had opportunity of considering the evil of sin, the curse of the law, and the immense goodness of God manifested in his Son; but when these things shall be plainly and faithfully set before them, surely they will submit, and thankfully receive the glad tidings.' With such sanguine hopes Melancthon entered the ministry at the dawn of the Reformation: he thought he had only to speak, and to be heard, in order to convince; but he soon found himself mistaken, and that the love of sin, the power of prejudice, and the devices of Satan, were such obstacles in his way, as nothing less than the mighty operations of the Spirit of God could break through. And all who preach upon his principles, and with his views, have known something of his disappointment. Speaking from the feelings of a full heart, they are ready to expect that others should be no less affected than themselves. But when they find that they are heard with indifference, perhaps with contempt; that those whose salvation they long for are enraged against them for their labour of love; that they cannot prevail upon their dearest friends and nearest relatives; This grieves and wounds them to the heart.

2. They have been convinced themselves, that unbelief was the worst of all their sins: and, therefore, though they pity all who live in the practice of sin, yet they have a double grief to see them reject the only means of salvation; and that this contempt will lie more heavily upon them than any thing they can be charged with besides. It gladdens the heart of a minister to see a large and attentive assembly; but how is this joy damped by a just fear, lest any, lest many of them should receive this grace of God in vain, and have cause at last to bewail the day when the name of Jesus was first sounded in their ears.

It seems plain, then, that those who are indifferent about the event of the Gospel, who satisfy themselves with this thought, that the elect shall be saved, and feel no concern for unawakened sinners, make a wrong inference from a true doctrine, and know not what spirit they are of. Jesus wept for those who perished in

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their sins. St. Paul had great grief and sorrow of heart for the Jews, though he gives them this character, 'They please not God, and are contrary to all men.' It well becomes us, while we admire distinguishing grace to ourselves, to mourn over others: and, inasmuch as secret things belong to the Lord, and we know not but some of whom we have at present but little hopes, may at last be brought to the knowledge of the truth, we should be patient and forbearing after the pattern of our heavenly Father, and endeavour, by every probable and prudent means, to stir them up to repentance, remembering that they cannot be more distant from God than, by nature, we were ourselves.

II. The best relief against those discouragements we meet with from men, is to raise our thoughts to God and heaven. For this the Lord Jesus is our precedent here. He said, 'I thank thee, O Father.' The word* signifies, to confess, to promise our consent, and to praise. As if it had been said, 'I glorify thy wisdom in this respect, I acknowledge and declare it is thy will, and I express my own consent and approbation.' Our Lord's views of the divine counsels were perfect, and therefore his satisfaction was complete. It is said, 'He rejoiced in spirit'† when he uttered these Words. And the more we increase in faith and in the knowledge of God, the more we shall be satisfied in his appointments, and shall see and say, 'He hath done all things well.' It is needful, for our comfort, to be well established in the truth suggested in my text, that the Lord hath provided for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and that his counsels shall surely stand. From this doctrine we may infer,

1. That where the faithful labours and endeavours of ministers, and others, to promote the knowledge of grace and the practice of holiness, fail of success, yet they shall be accepted. The servants of Christ may, in their humble measure, adopt the words of their Lord and Master, in the prophet, 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.'‡ When he sent forth his disciples, he directed them, wherever they entered, to say, 'Peace be to this house! and if a son of peace be there,' if there be any who thankfully accept your salutation and message, 'your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall return to you again:'‖ that is, your good wishes and endeavours shall not be lost for want of proper objects; but when they seem without effect on others, shall be productive of the happiest consequences to yourselves. You shall receive all you were desirous to communicate. Thus his ministers are to declare his whole will, whether men will hear,

* The original word occurs Matt. iii. 6. Luke xxii. 6, and Rom. xv. 9.
† Luke x. 21. ‡ Isa. xlix. 5. ‖ Luke x. 6.

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or whether they shall forbear. And if they do thus with a single eye to his glory, and in humble dependence upon his blessing, they are not answerable for the event, they shall in no wise lose their reward.

2. Faithful endeavours in the service of the Gospel shall not wholly fail. Though all will not hear, some certainly shall both hear and obey. Though all are by nature equally averse and incapable, yet there shall be 'a willing people in the day of God's power.'* If the wise and prudent turn away from the truth, there are babes to whom it shall be revealed. The Lord renews unto us a pledge of his faithfulness in this concern every time the rain descends. For thus he has promised, 'As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it.'†

3. The divine sovereignty is the best thought we can retreat to for composing and strengthening our minds under the difficulties, discouragements, and disappointments which attend the publication of the Gospel. The more we give way to reasonings and curious inquiries, the more we shall be perplexed and baffled. When Jeremiah‡ had been complaining of some things which were too hard for him, the Lord sent him to the potter's house, and taught him to infer, from the potter's power over the clay, the just right which the Lord of all hath to do what he will with his own. It is only the pride of our own hearts that prevents this consideration from being perfectly conclusive and satisfactory. How many schemes derogatory from the free grace of God, tending to darken the glory of the Gospel, and to depreciate the righteousness of the Redeemer, have taken their rise from vain, unnecessary attempts to vindicate the ways of God; or rather to limit the actings of infinite wisdom to the bounds of our narrow understandings, to sound the depths of the divine counsels with our feeble plummets, and to say to Omnipotence, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.' But upon the ground of the divine sovereignty we may rest satisfied and stable: for if God appoints and overrules all, according to the purpose of his own will, we have sufficient security, both for the present and the future.

First, for the present. We may firmly expect, what Scripture and reason concur to assure us, that 'the Judge of all the earth will do right.' Whatever to us appears otherwise in his proceed-

* Psal. cx. 3. † Isa. lv. 10. ‡ Jer. xviii. 6.

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ings should be charged to the darkness and weakness of our minds. We know that in every point of science difficulties and objections occur to young beginners, which, at first view, may seem almost unanswerable: but, as knowledge increases, the difficulties gradually subside, and, at last, we perceive they were *chiefly* owing to the defects of our apprehension. In divinity it is wholly so: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all:' his revealed will is, like himself, just, holy, pure in the whole, and perfectly consistent in every part. We may safely rest upon this general maxim, that 'the Judge of all the earth shall do right.' Though he does not give us a particular account of his dealings, and we are not fully able to comprehend them, yet we ought, against all appearances and proud reasonings, to settle it firmly in our minds, that every thing is conducted worthy the views which God has given us of himself in his holy word, as a Being of infinite justice, wisdom, goodness and truth. And further,

Secondly, For the future. He has appointed a day when he will make it appear that he *has done* right. Though clouds and darkness are now upon his proceedings, they shall, ere long, be removed. When all his designs in providence and grace are completed; when the present imperfect state of things shall be finished; when the dead, small and great, are summoned to stand before him; then the great Judge will condescend to unfold the whole train of his dispensations, and will justify his proceedings before angels and men; then every presumptuous cavil shall be silenced, every difficulty solved. His people shall admire his wisdom, his enemies shall confess his justice. The destruction of those who perish shall be acknowledged deserved, and of themselves; and the redeemed of the Lord shall ascribe all the glory of their salvation to him alone. What we shall then see, it is now our duty and our comfort assuredly to believe.

The great subject of our Saviour's joy, and which, so far as it is apprehended, will bear up his servants above all their difficulties and disappointments, I mean the consideration of the sovereign hand of God directing the success of his word when and where he pleases, we must defer speaking of till the next opportunity. And we shall close, at present, with a few inferences from what has been said thus far by way of introduction.

1. Take heed how you hear. The Gospel of salvation which is sent to you will be either a 'savour of life unto life, or of death unto death,' to every soul of you. There is no *medium*. Though, in a common and familiar way of speaking, we sometimes complain that the Gospel is preached without effect, there is, in reality, no possibility that it can be without effect. An effect it must and will have upon all who hear it. Happy they who receive and

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embrace it as the joyful sound, the unspeakable gift of God's love. To these it will be a 'savour of life unto life.' It will communicate life to the soul at first, and maintain that life, in defiance of all opposition, till it terminates in glory. But wo, wo to those who receive it not. It will be to them 'a savour of death unto death.' It will leave them under the sentence of death already denounced against them by the law which they have transgressed; and it will consign them to eternal death, under the heaviest aggravations of guilt and misery. Remember the doom of Capernaum, and why it was denounced. Jesus preached amongst them the words of eternal life, and they rejected him. This was all. In other things, perhaps, they were no worse than their neighbours, and probably disdained to hear themselves judged worthy of a heavier punishment than Sodom, and those cities which, for their abominations, were consumed with fire from heaven. But our Lord assures us it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who slight his word. For this guilt and condemnation is not confined to the Jews who rejected his person, but extended to all who should at any time treat his Gospel with contempt. However inconsiderable his ministers are in other respects, if they faithfully deliver his message, he has declared himself closely interested in the reception they meet with: 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth both me and him that sent me.'* It is therefore at your peril to treat what we say with indifference, (if we speak agreeably to the Scripture,) the word of God, which we preach, will judge you at the last day.

2. Be afraid of being wise in your own eyes, lest you should approach to the characters of those from whom the righteous God sees fit to hide the knowledge of those truths, without which they cannot be saved. The Gospel is not proposed to you to ask your opinion of it, that it may stand or fall according to your decision; but it peremptorily demands your submission. If you think yourselves qualified to judge and examine it by that imperfect and depraved light which you call your reason, you will probably find reasons enough to refuse your assent. Reason is properly exercised in the ordinary concerns of life, and has so far a place in religious inquiries, that none can or do believe the Gospel without having sufficient reasons for it. But you need a higher light, the light of God's Spirit, without which the most glorious displays of his wisdom will appear foolishness to you. If you come simple, dependent, and teachable; if you pray from your heart, with David, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see

* Matt. x. 40.

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wondrous things in thy law;'* you will be heard and answered; you will grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: but if you neglect this, and trust in yourselves, as supposing this promised assistance of the Holy Spirit unnecessary, the glorious light of the Gospel will shine upon you in vain; for Satan will maintain such hold of you, by this pride of your hearts, as still to keep you in bondage and darkness, that you shall neither see it, nor desire to see it.

3. Those of you who have some spiritual apprehensions of these things have reason to praise God that you see a *little*. You was once quite blind; you neither saw your disease nor your remedy. You could discern nothing of the excellence of Christ, or the beauties of holiness. But now the eyes of your understanding are in some measure enlightened. It is the grace of God has made you thus far to differ from what you once was, and from what multitudes around you still are. Be thankful. Accept it as a token for good. Be not discouraged that the beginnings are small; but wait on the Lord, and they shall be increased. Seek him by prayer. Converse with your Bibles. Attend upon the public ordinances. In the humble use of these means (while you endeavour to act faithfully, according to the light you have already received) you shall gradually advance in wisdom and comfort. The Christian growth is not instantaneous, but by degrees, as the early dawn increases in brightness, till the perfect day,† and as the corn comes forward surely, though unperceived.‡ In this manner, your views of Gospel truth shall increase in clearness, evidence, and influence, till you are removed from this land of shadows to the regions of perfect light, to behold the truth, as it shines in the person of Jesus, without a veil, and without a cloud, for ever.

* Psalm cxix. 18. † Prov. iv. 18. ‡ Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

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SERMON II.

IN WHAT SENSE THE MYSTERIES OF THE GOSPEL ARE HID FROM MANY.

MATT. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

WHEN our Lord appeared upon earth, though he came on the most gracious and important business, displayed the perfection of holiness in his conduct, and performed innumerable acts of kindness and love, he met with little regard. He found many enemies, but few hearty friends. Especially those who were most eminent for riches, learning, power, or reputed goodness, disdained him; and most of those who followed him were either people in low circumstances, or whose character had been offensive. Publicans and sinners, fishermen, unlearned and obscure persons, were almost the only friends he had. The Lord Jesus, who was infinitely above the selfish views which are too apt to influence our little minds, was well satisfied with this event. He did not desire honour from men. 'The souls of the poor were precious in his sight.'* He spoke kindly to those whom men abhorred; and, if he mourned over the obstinacy of the chiefs of the people, it was for their own sakes. Yet, (as I observed formerly,) when he considered the appointment and will of God, in this dispensation, he was not only content, but he rejoiced. He expressed his approbation in these words: 'I thank thee, O Father,' &c. There is something observable in this passage which will be of continual use and application, so long as the Gospel shall be preached. For as it was then, so it is still; the things that are hid from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. Five particulars offer from the words for our consideration.

1. What may be intended by *these things?*
2. Where and in what sense they are hid?
3. From whom? *The wise and prudent?*
4. How the knowledge of them is to be obtained? By revelation; *thou hast revealed.*
5. Who are thus favoured? *Babes.*

* Psalm lxxii. 13, 14.

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I. By the things which it pleases God should be hid from the wise, and revealed to babes, we may understand,

1. In general, the things pertaining to salvation. That most men are ignorant of them, and careless about them, is too plain. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the tree is known by its fruits. Men speak as though their tongues were their own; they act as though they were to give no account; they live as though they were to live here for ever. The way of truth is hid from their eyes, and the fear of God has no place in their hearts.

2. More particularly, those doctrines which are in an especial sense peculiar to the Gospel, seem here to be intended. If the principles of what some call Natural Religion, though agreeable to the light of natural conscience, are little regarded, the more spiritual truths of the Bible are not only neglected, but scorned and opposed. The same spirit which showed itself under our Lord's personal ministry still subsists. The chief doctrines he taught, and for which he met with the fiercest opposition, were precisely the same with those which have awakened the scorn and rage of the world ever since; and which multitudes who bear the name of Christians in this day oppose with all their strength. Such as,

First, the divinity of Christ. When he spoke of himself as existing before Abraham, and said that God was his *own* father,* the Jews took up stones to stone him. And this mystery is still hid from the natural man. No one can say, acknowledge, and believe, that Jesus Christ is Lord or Jehovah, that he who once hung upon the cross, bleeding to death, is God, the maker of all things, the rightful object of the supreme love, trust, and homage of men and angels, but by the Holy Ghost.†

Secondly, Distinguishing grace. 'When Jesus first preached at Nazareth, the eyes of all were fixed upon him;'‡ but when, making application to themselves, he touched upon this point, from the examples of Naaman the Syrian, and the widow of Sarepta, who were released when many lepers and widows in Israel

* John v. 18. Πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγε. He said that God was his *own* father; in a sense peculiar to himself, and exclusive of all others. The Jews well understood the meaning of this assertion, that thereby *he made himself equal with God;* and therefore, as they did not believe in him, they charged him with blasphemy. It would, indeed, have been blasphemy in mere man, or in the highest archangel, to have spoken of himself in these terms. But the force of the expression is lost in our version of the New Testament, through the omission of the word ἴδιον, *his own;* which seems one of the most important mistakes to be found in that translation.

† 1 Cor. xii. 3. ‡ Luke iv. 16—20.

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were passed by, they were filled with indignation, and would have thrown him headlong down the rock. And it is to this hour an offensive doctrine to all who do not know the value and the need of it.

Thirdly, The new birth. When this was proposed to a master in Israel, he cried out, 'How can these things be.'* And by many who are wise and prudent in their own sight, it is at this day accounted nonsense. A small acquaintance with the general strain of what is published either from the pulpit or the press, may prove that modern divinity has, for the most part, found a smoother path to tread than that by which Nicodemus was conducted to the knowledge of himself and his Saviour. Such a doubtful inquirer might now be entertained with many ingenious essays on the beauty of virtue, the efficacy of benevolence, the excellency of the human mind, and other favourite topics. He would find teachers enough to encourage and improve the idea he has of his own importance, but he would hardly meet with many who would speak to him in our Lord's language, and refer him to the brazen serpent, and a new birth, in order to learn the means and the nature of the Gospel salvation.

Fourthly, The nature of the life of faith. When our Lord spoke of this, under the metaphor of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, many, who till then had professed themselves his disciples, 'turned back, and walked no more with him.'† And none can bear it now, who are not taught of God, to see such an excellency and sufficiency in Jesus, and such emptiness in themselves, as constrains them to cry out, with Peter, 'Lord to whom shall we go ?'‡ These things are hid from the wise and prudent. But,

II. Where, and in what sense, are these things hid ?

1. Where are they hid ?

First, They are hid in Christ. 'In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'§ He is the great repository of truth. 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.‖ And he is the messenger by whom the will of God is made known to man.¶ From hence observe,

(1.) You can attain to no saving truth but in and by the knowledge of Jesus Christ. If they are hid in him, it can be but lost labour to seek them elsewhere.

(2.) Whatever seeming knowledge you have, if it does not endear him to you, it is nothing worth. It is science, falsely so cal-

* John iii. 9. † John vi. 66. ‡ John vi. 68.
§ Col ii. 3. ‖ Col. i. 19. ¶ Luke ix. 35. John i. 18.

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led, and can do you no good: for in the knowledge of him, and of him alone, is eternal life.*

Secondly, They are hid in the word of God.

(1.) They are contained there. 'The whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is able to make us wise unto salvation;'† to furnish us with a sufficiency of knowledge and motive for every good work. The word of God is perfect.

(2.) Yet though contained there, they are not plain to every eye. Though they are *revealed* in the letter, they are still hid from the wise and prudent. Something more is necessary than barely to read in order to understand them; otherwise all who can read, and have the Bible, would be equally enlightened with equal application. But experience shows it is far otherwise. This leads me further to inquire,

2. In what sense they are hid?

First, They are not hid as if it were on purpose that those who sincerely seek them should be disappointed in their search. Far be it from us to think so hardly of the Lord. We have express promises to the contrary, that all who earnestly seek shall find. Fear not, you that sincerely desire an experimental and practical knowledge of the truths of God, and are willing to be taught in his appointed way: though many things appear difficult to you at present, the Lord will gradually increase your light, and crown your endeavours with success.

Secondly, But from some persons they are hid, even from the wise and prudent, whom we are to speak of hereafter. Suffer me to offer a familiar illustration of the Lord's wisdom and justice in this procedure. Let me suppose a person to have a curious cabinet, which is opened at his pleasure, and not exposed to common view: he invites all to come to see it, and offers to show it to any one who asks him. It is hid, because he keeps the key; but none can complain, because he is ready to open it whenever he is desired. Some, perhaps, disdain the offer, and say, Why is it locked at all? Some think it not worth seeing, or amuse themselves with guessing at the contents. But those who are simply desirous for themselves, leave others disputing, go according to appointment, and are gratified. These have reason to be thankful for the favour; and the others have no just cause to find fault. Thus the riches of divine grace may be compared to a richly-furnished cabinet, to which Christ is the door. The word of God, likewise, is a cabinet generally locked up; but the key of prayer will open it. The Lord invites all; but he keeps the dispensa-

* John xvii. 3. † 2 Tim. iii. 16.

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tion in his own hand. They cannot see these things except he shows them; but then he refuses none that sincerely ask him. The wise men of the world can go no further than the outside of this cabinet; they may amuse themselves, and surprise others, with their ingenious guesses at what is within; but a babe that has seen it opened can give us more satisfaction without studying or guessing at all. If men will presume to aim at the knowledge of God, without the knowledge of Christ, who is the way, and the door; if they have such a high opinion of their own wisdom and penetration, as to suppose they can understand the Scriptures without the assistance of his Spirit; or if their worldly wisdom teaches them that these things are not worth their inquiry; what wonder is it that they should continue to be hid from their eyes? They will one day be stripped of their false pleas, and condemned out of their own mouths.

Thirdly, the expression, 'Thou hast hid,' may perhaps further imply, that those who seek occasion to cavil, shall meet with something to confirm their prejudices. When people examine the doctrines or profession of the Gospel, not with a candid desire to learn, imitate and practise, but in order to find some plausible ground for misrepresentation, they frequently have their wish. The wisdom of God has appointed that difficulties, offences, objections, and stumbling-blocks should attend, to exercise and manifest the spirits of these wise ones. How largely do they expatiate on the divisions and difference of sentiments which too much prevail among those who are united in the same leading truths! If they can discover an instance of error, folly, or wickedness, of a single person who professes to adhere to the Gospel doctrine, how do they rejoice as if they had found great spoil, charge the faults of a few indiscriminately upon the whole, and labour to show that every mistake and inadvertence is a necessary consequence of the principles which those maintain who commit it. We do not plead for mistakes and errors of any sort, for weakness in judgment, or inconsistence in practice. But as these things are more or less inseparable from the present state of human nature, they necessarily increase and strengthen the prepossession of scorners against the truth, and are so far a means of hiding it from their eyes. Yet here again the fault is wholly in themselves; for they seek and desire such occasions of stumbling, and would be disappointed and grieved if they could not meet with them. But those who are babes in their own eyes, humble, sincere, and teachable, are brought safe through, by a simple dependent spirit, and are made wiser every day, by their observation of what passes around them.

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Many inferences and advices might be deduced from what has been said. I shall content myself with three.

1. Examine yourselves what understanding and experience you have of the things I mentioned under the first head. So much as you know of these, so far you are Christians, and no further. 'A form of godliness, without the power,'* is one of the worst characters of the worst times; yet how common in the present day! How many who choose to be called Christians reject the testimony which God has given of his Son, deny the efficacy of his grace, speak of the new birth with disdain, as unintelligible and unnecessary, and account all that can be said of the life of faith (though founded upon express Scripture, and attested by many witnesses) no better than enthusiastic jargon! But if you are thus minded, however sober your deportment, or professedly benevolent your disposition, though you may be applauded as a pattern of generosity, a philosopher, or a saint, by your acquaintance and neighbours, if the Scriptures are true, you can be but as a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal in the sight of God. You would have despised Thomas in your heart, if you had been witness to his joyful exclamation when he worshipped Jesus, and cried, 'My Lord and my God.'† You would have despised Paul as a dark enthusiast, had you heard him say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'‡ Yea, you must have despised Jesus himself, if you had been present at his conference with Nicodemus. Our Lord Jesus is now in heaven, Thomas and Paul have been long dead; you cannot reach them; nor do they stand in your way; therefore, perhaps you are content to speak well of them in general terms. But those who come nearest to their language and spirit are the objects of your scorn and hatred. How, then, can you pretend to love him, or presume that he loves you? Jesus is worshipped in heaven; how then can you expect to come there? or what pleasure could you find there, in your present turn of mind? 'O kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish; for in a little time his wrath will burn like fire.'

But to every one who understands, embraces, and lives under the influence of these truths, I may safely apply our Lord's words, 'Blessed art thou,'§ however despised by men, or chastened of the Lord; 'for flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee;' thou hast assuredly received them from God, by his Spirit. He alone is able to cause the light to shine into our

* 2 Tim. iii. 5.
† John xx. 28.
‡ Gal. ii. 20.
§ Matt. xvi. 17.

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dark hearts, 'to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'*

2. Do not entertain hard and perplexing thoughts about the counsels of God, either respecting others or yourselves.

First, With regard to others. It is a frequent difficulty, either thrown in the way of inquirers after truth by the subtilty of Satan, or perhaps arising from the natural pride of the human heart, that would be thought able to account for every thing. I say, when they begin to apprehend the Gospel way of salvation, this perplexing question arises, If things are so, what will become of multitudes? What! are all the Heathens, Mahometans, Papists, and even all the Protestants, except the few who adopt these singular sentiments, to be lost? I shall not attempt to conquer this objection by dint of reasoning, but would rather persuade you to direct your reasonings another way. When the same question for substance was proposed to our Lord, his answer to those who asked him was, 'Strive (each one for yourselves) to enter in at the strait gate.'† Take care of yourselves, and leave the cases of others to the Lord. Remember he is God, and therefore just and good.

Secondly, With regard to yourselves. Secret things belong to God; your business is with what is revealed. Some put the word of salvation from them perversely, and think, if the Lord designs me for eternal life, he will call me in his own time; till then I will go on in my sins. Those who can reason thus, and take encouragement to persist in wickedness, from the consideration of the power and efficacy of God's grace, do thereby avow themselves to be Satan's willing servants. But he terrifies many on whom he cannot thus prevail, with representing to them, that, let them do what they will, it is all in vain; unless the Lord has chosen them, notwithstanding any good beginnings they may hope he has wrought in them, they will come to nothing at last. It is your business to give all diligence to make your calling sure. If, by a humble waiting upon God, you are enabled to have your conversation according to the Gospel, listen not to vain and perplexing reasonings, but commit yourself to the mercy and guidance of the Lord; and he, in his good time, will enable you to see, and to say, that it is not in vain to trust in him. Your path shall be like the advancing light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The Lord has already provided all that you can reasonably desire.

(1.) The means are pointed out, in the use of which you are to be found, and wherein you may expect his blessing.

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Luke xiii. 23, 24.

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These are chiefly secret prayer, the study of his written word, an attendance on the preached Gospel, and free converse (as proper opportunities are afforded) with his believing people. If you continue in the observance of these, and act faithfully to the light you have already received, by breaking off from the evil practices of the world, and watching against those things which you yourself know to be evil, you will certainly gain ground in light, strength, and comfort. You will see more and more of the glory of the Lord in the glass of the Gospel; and, in proportion to your views, you shall be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory.' For,

(2.) The promise is sure. What God has said you may assuredly depend on. And what has he said? What, indeed, has he not said for the encouragement of those who are sincerely desirous to seek and serve him? 'They that seek shall find. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. He giveth power to the weak; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.'*

If, therefore, you feel yourself a lost sinner, see a beauty and sufficiency in Jesus, have a hunger and thirst after his righteousness, and are made willing to expect the blessing in his way, you may look upon this as a token for good. Such views and desires as these never are found in any heart till he communicates them. By nature we are averse and contrary to them. Give him the glory of what he has begun; and oppose your temptations, fears, and doubts, with this argument, drawn from your own experience, as the wife of Manoah formerly reasoned: 'If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have enabled and encouraged us to call upon him; neither would he, at this time, have shown us such things as these.'†

* Matt. vii. 7, 8. Isa. xl. 29—31. Isa. xliv. 3. † Judges xiii. 23.

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SERMON III.

THE CHARACTERS OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL DOCTRINES ARE HID.

MATT. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

THE judgments of God are a great deep. He does not give us a full account of his matters; much less can *we*, by searching, find out *him* to perfection; yet if we carefully attend to what he has revealed, and apply his written word with humility and caution to what passes in ourselves, and around us, we may, by his grace, attain to some considerable satisfaction in things which, at first view, seem hard to be understood. The subject of my text is of this nature. That God should hide things of everlasting consequence from any persons, sounds very harsh: but I hope, when the words are explained, we shall see that, though he acts as a sovereign in his dispensations, his ways are just, and good, and equal.

We have already made an entrance upon this attempt. Besides some general observations in my first discourse, I endeavoured to show you, in the second, 1. What the things are to which our Lord refers; 2. When, and in what sense, they are hid. I proceed now to consider,

III. From whom they are hid—*the wise and prudent.* It will, I think, be readily supposed that the expression does not mean those who are truly so, and in God's account. He esteems none to be wise and prudent but those who are enlightened with his spiritual wisdom, who now serve and love him in Christ. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning (or, as the word likewise signifies, the head or principal part) of wisdom;'* and from such as these he hides or keeps back nothing that is profitable for them: on the contrary, that promise is sure, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant.'† When our Lord said, 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,'‡ he did not mean they

* Ps. cxi. 10. † Ps. xxv. 14. ‡ Luke xvi. 8.

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were so absolutely, for their boasted wisdom is the merest folly, but only that they acted consistently with their own principles. The wise and prudent here are either those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, or those who are generally so reputed by the bulk of mankind. And these two amount to the same: for as the natural wisdom of man springs from the same fountain, *self*, and is confined to the same bounds, *the things of time and sense*, in all alike, (though there is a variety of pursuits within these limits, as tempers and situations differ,) men are generally prone to approve and applaud those who act upon their own principles.

We may take notice, then, (as a key to this inquiry,) that what is accounted wisdom by the world, is not only different from the wisdom of God, but inconsistent with it, and opposite to it. They differ as fire and water, light and darkness; the prevalence of the one necessarily includes the suppression of the other. See this at large insisted on by St. Paul, in the beginning of his first epistle to the Corinthians, the first, second, and third chapters.

Who, then, are the wise and prudent intended in my text? May the Holy Spirit enable every conscience to make faithful application of what shall be offered upon this head.

1. In the judgment of the world, those are wise and prudent persons who are very thoughtful and diligent about acquiring wealth, especially if their endeavours are crowned with remarkable success. If a man thrives (as the phrase is) from small beginnings, and joins house to house, and field to field, so that he has land to call after his own name, and large possessions to leave to his children, how he is applauded (though, at the same time, envied) by the most who know him! I do not deny that a proper concern and industry in our secular calling is both lawful and our duty; and I allow that the providence of God does sometimes remarkably prosper those who depend on him in the management of their business; but I make no scruple to affirm, that where this is the main concern, (as some call it,) such wisdom is madness. Such persons are no less idolaters than those who worship stocks and stones. And if the things of God are hid from them, it is surely their own fault; they do not even complain of it as a hardship; they have their choice, their reward, and are satisfied. They are told that these things are in Christ, and there they are content that they should remain; they see no beauty or suitableness in *them*, they have no desire after *him*; he might keep his heaven and truths to himself, if they could always have their fill of the world. They are told that these things are hid in the Scripture, but they have neither leisure nor inclination to search

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there for them. Their time is taken up with buying and selling, building and planting, &c. Oh, beware of this wisdom! 'What will riches profit you in the day of wrath,'* at death or judgment? If you live and die in this spirit, you will bemoan your choice when it is too late.

2. Those are accounted wise and prudent who think they have found a way to reconcile God and the world together. If a man should attempt to fly, or to walk upon the water, he would be deemed a fool. How is it that this endeavour, which is equally impossible, (and expressly declared so by our Lord,) should be more favourably thought of? The deceitfulness of the heart and subtilty of Satan, concur in this point. You will have a sort of religion, but then you take care not to carry things too far. You are governed by the fear and regard of men. Something you will do to satisfy conscience, but not too much, lest you hurt your interest, disoblige your friends, or draw on yourselves reproach, or a hard name. I must tell you, from the word of God, your attempt to halve things is an abomination in his sight. Would it not be treason by the law, to pay the king an outward respect, and yet hold secret correspondence with his enemies? The decisions of the word of God are to the same effect in this instance. 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'† 'Know you not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.'‡

3. A man is deemed wise who has considerable knowledge and curiosity about natural things, and all those subjects which usually bear the name of *science:* if he can talk of the magnitudes, distances, and motions of the heavenly bodies, can foretel an eclipse, has skill in mathematics, is well read in the history of ancient times, and can inform you what is found in books concerning the folly and wickedness of mankind who lived some thousands of years ago; or if he understands several languages, and can call a thing by twenty different names. It is true, when these attainments are sanctified by grace, they may in some respects have their use. But, in general, the best use a believer will or can make of them, is to lay them down at the foot of the cross. When a man possessed of a large quantity of these pebbles has his conscience awakened, and his understanding enlightened, he is glad to renounce them all for the pearl of great price, and to adopt the apostle's determination, 'to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'‖ This was the effect when the word

* Prov. xi. 14. † 1 John ii. 15. ‡ James iv. 4. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

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of God mightily grew and prevailed.* We may at least say, that this kind of wisdom is, for the most part, dangerous and blinding to the soul.

1st. It tends to feed and exalt self, to make a person something in his own eyes. This we are prone enough to by nature. An increase of unsanctified knowledge adds fuel to fire.

2dly. It engrosses the time and thoughts. Our minds are narrow, capable of attending to but few things at once: and our span is short, and will hardly admit of many excursions from the main concern. If we were to live to the age of Methuselah, we might pursue some things which at present are highly improper and impertinent from this consideration alone. A man that is upon an urgent affair of life and death, has no leisure for amusement. Such is our situation. We are creatures of a day. Time is vanishing, and eternity is at stake.

3dly. The delusion here is specious, and not easily discovered. A person with these accomplishments is not always enslaved to money, or to sensual pleasures: he therefore pities those who are, and, comparing himself with others, supposes he is well employed, because his favourite studies are a check upon his appetites, and prevent his selling himself for gold, or running into riot with the thoughtless. Yet an attachment of this sort equally blinds him with respect to his true interest. Will the knowledge of books, or men, or stars, or flowers, purify the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? It is too plain, that the truths of the Gospel are hid from none more effectually than from many of this character. None cast a more daring or public slight upon the revealed will of God, than some who are admired and applauded on account of their knowledge and learning.

4thly. Your nice and curious reasoners and disputers, that will see (as they profess) the bottom of every thing, and trust to their own judgment and inquiries, independent of the Spirit of God, are another sort of wise persons from whom these things are often justly hid. And this character may be found in many, both learned and unlearned: for many have good natural faculties, who have not had the advantages of learning and education. But this spirit is directly contrary to that simplicity, dependence, and obedience of faith, which the Scripture exhorts us to seek after. Its effects are various.

1st. Some (and those not a few) are led to reject the word of God altogether, because it evidently contains many things above and contrary to their vain imaginations. And herein they contradict the most obvious principles of that reason which they

* Acts xix. 10.

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lay claim to. A revelation from God can only be thought necessary or probable, but on the supposition that it is to inform us of something which we could not have known without it. Therefore, to pretend to try the Scripture claim to this character by such criteria or marks as we possess beforehand, is the same thing, in effect, as to determine to reject it without any trial at all.

2dly. When the Scriptures, as to the letter, are acknowledged to be true, persons of this turn, presuming themselves sufficient judges of the sense, are helped by their ingenuity to explain away all the sublime doctrines of truths, so as to suit the prejudices and apprehensions of their own carnal minds. This, especially when joined with a smattering of learning, has been the chief source of all the errors and heresies which have pestered the church of God in all ages. This is a principal cause why the depravity of man by nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, the operations of the Holy Spirit, and all the doctrines of grace, have been denied by men wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, though evidently contained in the book which they profess to receive as of divine inspiration.

3dly. Even where the doctrines of grace have been notionally received, the same spirit of wisdom can still find occasion to work. When there is more knowledge in the head than experience in the heart, many and various are the evils that often ensue. Disputes and hard questions are started, contentions and divisions multiplied, and people are more eager to perplex others than to edify themselves. Thus the name and counsels of God are profaned by an irreverent curiosity; and the clear, express declarations of his will darkened by words without knowledge. When this natural wisdom puts on a spiritual appearance, no persons are more fatally deceived, or more obstinately hardened. They think they can learn no more, but are wise enough to teach every one: they neglect the use of God's appointed means themselves, and despise them in others: they are proud, censorious, obstinate, and full of deceit. Take care of Satan at all times, but especially when he would transform himself into an angel of light. There is reason to think the things of God are entirely hid, as to their power and excellence, from some who fondly dream that none are acquainted with them but themselves.

The consideration of this subject may lead to a variety of improvement. It may teach you,

1. What to fear. A worldly spirit. This, in a prevailing degree, is inconsistent with a word of grace, and, in whatever degree it obtains, or is indulged, will proportionably retard and abate the

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light and comfort of our souls. The cares and pleasures of this life are, by our Lord, compared to thorns,* unprofitable and painful; they produce no fruit, but they wound and tear. Yea, they are thorns in the eyes,† which will prevent the great things of God from being perceived.

A spirit of self dependence. 'Be not wise in your own conceits.'‡ 'If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.'§ God giveth wisdom to the lowly, but he confounds the devices of the proud. His promises of teaching, leading, and guiding, are made to the meek, the simple, and those who are little in their own eyes.

2. What to pray for. A simple child-like temper; that you may come to the word as to the light, and look beyond yourselves for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without which your most laboured inquiries will only mislead you further and further from the truth.

3. How to examine yourselves. Not by your notions and attainments in knowledge, for these you may have in a considerable degree, and be wholly destitute of true grace. The word of God supposes it possible that persons may have great gifts,‖ flaming zeal, and much success; and yet, having no true love to God, be, in his sight, no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. But if you would know your state, examine by your prevailing desires. Are your notions of grace effectual to lead you in the path of duty? Do you hunger and thirst for an increase of holiness? Does the knowledge you have of Christ lead you to love and trust him? Are you poor in spirit? You know nothing aright, if you know not yourselves.

4. Ye that are believers may see cause to praise the Lord for his dispensations to you.

1st. Had you been wise in men's esteem, you might have continued fools to the end of your lives. If the Lord has taught you the secret of them that fear him, if he has shown you the way of salvation, if he has directed your feet in the paths of his commandments, then you have the true wisdom which shall be your light through life, and in death your glory. Therefore,

2dly. Be not grieved that ye are strangers to human wisdom and glory. These things, which others so highly prize, you may resign contentedly, and say, 'Lord, it is enough if thou art mine.' Nay, you have good reason to praise his wisdom and goodness

* Matt. xiii. 22. † Josh. xxiii. 13. ‡ Rom. xii. 16.
§ 1 Cor. viii. 2. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

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for preserving you from those temptations which have ensnared and endangered so many.

3dly. Do you desire more of this true wisdom? Seek it in the same way in which you have received the first beginnings. Be frequent and earnest in secret prayer. Study the word of God, and study it not to reconcile and make it bend to your sentiments, but to draw all your sentiments from it, to copy it in your heart, and express it in your conduct. Be cautious of paying too great a regard to persons and parties. One is your master, even Christ. Stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free; and, while you humbly endeavour to profit by all, do not resign your understanding to any but to him who is the only wise God, the only effectual and infallible teacher. Compare the experience of what passes within your own breast, with the observations you make of what daily occurs around you; and bring all your remarks and experiences to the touchstone of God's holy word. Thus shall you grow in knowledge and in grace; and, amidst the various discouragements which may arise from remaining ignorance in yourselves or others, take comfort in reflecting that you are drawing near to the land of light, where there will be no darkness at all. Then you shall know as you are known; your love and your joy shall likewise be perfect, and you shall be satisfied with the rivers of pleasure which are before the throne of God, world without end.

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL REVELATION, AND WHO ARE FAVOURED WITH IT.

MATT. xi. 25.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

WE proceed now to the more pleasing part of our subject. The great things of the Gospel, though hid, are not lost: not hid as in the bottom of the sea; but he who hides them from the wise and prudent is ready and willing to make them known to every sincere inquirer. This discovery, on the Lord's part, is a revelation, and the character of those who obtain it is

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expressed by the word *babes*. Of the five particulars I proposed to consider from the text, these two yet remain to be spoken to.

IV. The saving knowledge of divine truth is a revelation. Our Lord uses a parallel expression, when he commends Peter's confession of his faith; 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'* Peter had Moses and the prophets, so had the Scribes and Pharisees; and after their manner they were diligent in reading and searching them. But that he could acknowledge Jesus to be Messiah, when they rejected him, was because the Father had revealed his truth to him, and given him a clearer knowledge of it than he could have received from the written word alone. But it may be proper to inquire into the meaning of this term. What are we here to understand by revelation?

Sometimes revelation is used in an extraordinary sense, as when of old the Lord made known to his servants, the prophets, those doctrines and events which, till then, were neither heard nor thought of. Of this we are not now to speak, but of that which is common to all believers, and necessary to salvation.

Now this revelation supposes the things to be revealed were real and certain before, but unknown, and not to be found out in any other way.

Revelation is not the creation or invention of something new, but the manifestation of what was till then unknown. The great things of eternity, the glorious truths of the Gospel, are real and certain in themselves already, and do not begin to be when we begin to be acquainted with them: yet, till God is pleased to reveal them to the heart, we have no more spiritual and effective knowledge of them than if they were not. Ignorance of things very near to us, and in which we are nearly concerned, may be from two causes.

1. From a want of light. Nothing can be perceived in the dark. If you are in a dark room, though it is richly adorned and furnished, all is lost to you. If you stand, in a dark night, upon the top of a hill that commands a fine prospect, still you are able to see no more than if you was in a valley. Though you were in a dangerous place, with pitfalls, and precipices, and thieves, and murderers all around you, still you might imagine yourself in safety, if you had no light with you.

* Matt. xvi. 17.

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2. It may be from some hindrance or obstruction between you and the object. Thus your dearest friend, or greatest enemy, might be within a few yards of you, and you know nothing of it, if there was a wall between you.

These comparisons may, in some measure, represent our case by nature. God is near: 'in him we live, move, and have our being.' Eternity is near; we stand upon the brink of it. Death is near, advancing towards us with hasty strides. The truths of God's word are most certain in themselves, and of the utmost consequence to us. But we perceive none of these things; we are not affected by them, because our understandings are dark, and because thick walls of ignorance, prejudice, and unbelief, stand before the eyes of the mind, and keep them from our view. Even those notions of truth which we sometimes pick up by hearing and reading, are but like windows in a dark room; they are suited to afford an entrance to the light when it comes, but can give no light of themselves.

I think, therefore, we may conclude that God's revealing these things to us only signifies his effecting such a change in us, by his Holy Spirit, as disposes and enables us to behold them. He sends a divine light into the soul; and things begin to appear so plain, we wonder at our former stupidity that we could not perceive them before. By the power of his Spirit he breaks down the walls which prevented and confined our views; and a new unthought-of prospect suddenly appears before us. Then the soul sees its danger: 'I thought myself secure; but I find I am in the midst of enemies. Guilt pursues me behind, fear, and the snare, and the pit, are before me; which way shall I turn?' Then it perceives its mistake: 'While my views were confined, I thought there was nothing but this span of life to take care of; but now I see a boundless eternity beyond it.' It obtains a glimpse, likewise, of the glories of the better world, of the beauties of holiness, of the excellency of Jesus. This light is at first faint and imperfect, but grows stronger by the use of appointed means; and as it is increased, every thing appears with a stronger evidence.

We may more particularly illustrate this work of the Holy Spirit, as it influences those leading faculties of the soul, the understanding, affections, and will. By nature the will is perverse and rebellious, and the affections alienated from God: the primary cause of these disorders lies in the darkness of the understanding. Here, then, the change begins. The Spirit of God enlightens the understanding, by which the sinner perceives things to be as they are represented in the word of God; that he is a transgressor against the divine law, and on this account obnoxious to

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wrath: that he is not only guilty, but depraved and unclean, and utterly unable either to repair past evil or to amend his own heart and life. He sees that the great God might justly refuse him mercy; and that he has no plea to offer in arrest of judgment. This discovery would sink him into despair, if it went no further; but by the same light which discovers him to himself, he begins to see a suitableness, wisdom, and glory, in the method of salvation revealed in the Gospel. He reads and hears concerning the person, sufferings, and offices of Christ, in a very different manner to what he did before; and as, by attending to the word and ministry, his apprehensions of Jesus, and his understanding, become more clear and distinct, a spiritual hope takes place, and increases in his soul; and the sure effect of this is, he feels his love drawn forth to Him who so loved him as to die for his sins. Beholding, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, as bleeding and dying upon the cross; and knowing for whom, and on what account he suffered, he learns to hate, with a bitter hatred, those sins which nailed him there. The amazing love of Christ constrains him to account all things which he formerly valued as dross and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of his Saviour. Nor does his faith stop here; he views Him who once suffered and died, rising triumphant from the tomb, and ascending into heaven in the character of the representative, friend, and forerunner of his people. Having such a High Priest, he is encouraged to draw near to God, to claim an interest in the promises respecting the life that now is, and that which is to come. Thus possessing, in the beginnings of grace, an earnest of the glory that shall be revealed; a real, universal, abiding change necessarily takes place in the affections. Now old things are passed away, and all things become new: the soul no longer cleaves willingly to the dust, or can be satisfied with earthly things, but thirsts for communion with God, and an increase of holiness. Sin is no longer consented to, or delighted in, but is opposed and watched against; and every unallowed deviation from the will of God excites the sincerest grief and humiliation, and leads to renewed application to the blood and grace of Jesus for pardon and strength. Thus the will likewise is brought into an unreserved subjection and surrender to the power of Christ, and acts as freely in his service as it once did against him. For that what is termed *the freedom of the human will* should consist in a suspended indifference between good and evil, is a refinement, which, however admired and applauded by many, is equally contrary both to sound reasoning and to universal experience. The will, in all persons and cases, is determined by the present dictates of the understanding, and the bent of the affections.

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By ascribing so much to the Spirit of God, I do not mean, as you may perceive, by what I have just now said, to seclude his holy word or preached Gospel. All these truths and prospects are already contained in the word of God; but without the light of the Spirit they are not discerned. They are propounded to you in the public ministry. We testify again and again, the things which we have seen and heard of the word of life; and when we are in some measure affected with their evidence, we are ready to wonder how any of you can possibly avoid perceiving them, till we remember how it was with ourselves, and then we know, by our own experience, that *we* must preach and *you* hear in vain, unless the Lord is pleased to open you hearts. But observe,

1. The Spirit of God teaches and enlightens by his word as the instrument. There is no revelation from him, but what is (as to our perception of it) derived from the Scripture. There may be supposed illuminations, and strong impressions upon the mind, in which the word of God has no place or concern; but this alone is sufficient to discountenance them, and to prove that they are not from the Holy Spirit. For,

2. The Scripture is the appointed rule and test by which all our searches and discoveries, all our acquisitions in religious knowledge, must be tried. If they are indeed from God, they will stand this trial, and answer to the word, as face answereth to face in a glass, but not otherwise. 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'* If those who despise all claims to the influence of the Spirit of God, as enthusiasm, had not been frequently informed that we expect, we acknowledge, no internal revelation, but by the medium of the word of God, and agreeable to it, they would be less inexcusable in repeating the charges of folly and infatuation which they ignorantly fix upon the work of the Spirit, and all who profess a dependence on it. To those who are, indeed, candid and sincere inquirers after truth, what has been said upon this part of our subject will, I hope, suggest the propriety of two directions. From hence learn,

1. To set a high value upon the word of God. All that is necessary to make you wise to salvation is there, and there only. In this precious book you may find a direction for every doubt, a solution of every difficulty, a promise suited to every circumstance you can be in. There you may be informed of your disease by sin, and the remedy provided by grace. You may be instructed to know yourselves, to know God and Jesus Christ, in

* Isa. viii. 20.

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the knowledge of whom standeth eternal life. The wonders of redeeming love, the glories of the Redeemer's person, the happiness of the redeemed people, the power of faith, and the beauty of holiness, are here represented to the life. Nothing is wanting to make life useful and comfortable, death safe and desirable, and to bring down something of heaven upon earth. But this true wisdom can be found no where else. If you wander from the Scripture, in pursuit either of present peace or future hope, your search will end in disappointment. This is the fountain of living waters: if you forsake it, and give the preference to broken cisterns of your own devising, they will fail you when you most need them. Rejoice, therefore, that such a treasure is put into your hand; but rejoice with trembling. Remember this is not all you want; unless God likewise gives you a heart to use it aright, your privilege will only aggravate your guilt and misery. Therefore remember,

2. The necessity of prayer. For though the things of nearest consequence to you are in the Bible, and you should read it over and over, till you commit the whole book to your memory; yet you will not understand or discern the truth, as it is in Jesus, unless the Lord the Spirit shows it to you. The dispensation of truth is in his hand; and without him all the fancied advantages of superior capacity, learning, criticism, and books, will prove as useless as spectacles to the blind. The great encouragement is, that this infallible Spirit, so necessary to guide us into the way of peace, is promised to all who sincerely ask it. This Spirit Jesus is exalted to bestow; and he has said, 'Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Therefore water your reading with frequent prayer. We proceed to,

V. The characters of those persons who succeed in their inquiries, and have the things of God savingly revealed to them; they are called *babes*.

1. They are, for the most part, babes in the world's esteem. They are despised by the wise and prudent for their weak capacities, small attainments, and their seeming insignificance in common life. But the Lord does not overlook any on these accounts. He is no respecter of persons. In the blessings of his common providence, those which are more immediately from his own hand, such as air and light, health and strength, the faculties of sight and hearing, &c. he bestows as freely, and in as great perfection, to the poor as to the rich, to the ignorant as to the learned. And thus it is with respect to his grace. Our incapacity is founded in our nature, and is common to all, and not in any particular circumstances. He is as ready to save the mean as the noble. Many of the great and wise are offended at this. As they en-

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gross the earth, they would willingly engross heaven also to themselves. But the Lord has appointed otherwise; and it has been one reproach constantly attending the Gospel, that few but the common people have thought it worth their notice.*

2. They are babes in their own esteem. Not that some are more humble than others by nature, and therefore the Lord gives them a preference on that account; by nature we are all alike, equally destitute of the smallest good: but the expression teaches us, that those to whom the Lord is pleased to reveal these things, he first empties and humbles, strips them of all ground of boasting, and brings them to a dependence on himself. The true believer is frequently compared to a little child; and it is easy to trace an instructive resemblance.

1st. A child, or babe, has little knowledge, and its capacity and powers are as yet very feeble. All whose understandings have been spiritually enlightened will acknowledge themselves children in this respect. The little they know convinces them of their ignorance. They are convinced that their views of things are faint, partial, confused; that their judgments are weak; that, if the Lord prevents it not, they are very liable to be imposed on by the subtilty of Satan, and the treachery of their own hearts. They feel that they have not, in themselves, sufficiency to think a good thought.

2dly. A child is teachable. Conscious of their own ignorance, they listen to all about them, and think every one is qualified to teach them something. Among men none are truly teachable but those who know they need to be taught. The natural man, if possessed of any advantages, thinks every one needs his help. The humble Christian gives this proof, that the confession he is ready to make of his ignorance is genuine, and from his heart, that he is desirous to learn from all. He is swift to hear, slow to speak, and open to conviction. Though he will not assent to every thing he hears, without proof or examination, yet he is disposed to receive instruction, and thankful to those by whom he is profited. He is fearful of being mistaken, of giving way to prejudices, and therefore gladly improves every means of information.

3dly. A child is simple and dependent. He does not reason, but implicitly receives what he is told by his parents, or those whom he thinks wiser than himself. Such a resignation, indeed, the believer dares not make of his understanding to any men, however highly he may esteem them in the main: for he has learned, from the word of God, not to put his trust in man; but

*Mark xii. 37. John vii. 48, 49.

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this is the desire of the renewed heart, with respect to the teaching of God's word and Spirit. He allows no reasoning or questioning here; nor will he say, with Nicodemus, 'How can these things be?' It is enough for him that God has said it, and is able to make it good. This is a happy temper. In this way innumerable difficulties that arise from appearances and sophisms, are avoided; and the mind, by faith, steers in safety across the immense ocean of conjectures and opinions, which disputants and reasoners essaying to do, are sunk and overpowered. It is true, there are various degrees of this simplicity; and in those who possess it in a larger measure, there is a remaining principle of pride and unbelief, which costs them much prayer and many conflicts to subdue. But this, in some degree, is essential to the character of those who are taught of God; they desire and endeavour to submit wholly to his guidance and will in all things.

Here, then, is a proper topic for self-examination. Let each one ask his heart, Have I this simple, child-like disposition?

If you have, if it is the desire of your soul to be taught of God, if his word is your rule, if you depend on his Spirit to teach you all things, and to lead you as it were by the hand, sensible that, unless you are thus led and guided, you shall certainly go astray; be thankful for this, accept it as a token for good. You were not always so; there was a time when you were wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight. You have good warrant to hope that the Lord, who has already taught you to depend on himself, will show you all that is necessary for you to know.

But if this is not the case, if you lean to your own understanding, what wonder is it that you are still walking in darkness and uncertainty? Will you say, I have read the Bible diligently; I have taken no small pains to examine things, to see which of the many divisions that obtain among Christians is possessed of the truth; but I am still at a loss: surely, if the tenets some plead for had been in the Scripture, I should have found them there! I answer, without detracting from your sagacity or your sincerity, your case is easily accounted for from the verse we are upon, if your inquiries are not conducted in a humble dependence upon the Spirit of God. Too many instances we could produce of men, who having laboured for years in what seems one of the most laudable undertakings, the explaining the Scriptures for the use of others, have at last been in a remarkable degree unsettled themselves; and the only visible fruits their reading and industry has afforded, have been error, invective, and dissatisfaction: so that their labours have been an exemplification of the former part of our text; a proof in point, how entirely the things of God are often hid from the wise and prudent.

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You that are seeking the Lord, and are little in your own eyes, rejoice that the dispensation of grace is in his hands. If men had the disposal of it, you might perhaps have been overlooked. We should have been ready to have accepted the fair-spoken young man, who accosted our Lord with so much outward respect, and had so much to say in his own behalf:* and probably we should have left the thief upon the cross to perish like a wretch, as he deserved. 'But the Lord seeth not as man seeth.'† 'His ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.'‡ Therefore there is encouragement for the meanest and the vilest. He has excluded none but those who exclude themselves. 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

SERMON V.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE ASSERTED AND ILLUSTRATED.

MATT. xi. 26.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

THAT the doctrine in the preceding verse is true in fact, is sufficiently evident from common observation. The greatest part of those whom the world esteems wise and prudent, and all, to a man, who think themselves so, pay but small regard to the truths of the Gospel. They are hid from their eyes, and revealed to babes, to those whom they despise on account of their ignorance and insignificance. And if a few who are favoured with considerable advantages in point of genius, education, or rank, do receive the truth in the love of it, they have been at least taught that they are no better than babes, and are glad to count all outward things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

If we could give no other reason for this dispensation of grace, than that which is assigned in our text, it ought to be satisfacto-

* Mark x. 20. † 1 Sam. xvi. 7. ‡ Isa. lv. 7—9.

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ry; and would be so, if it was not for the pride of our hearts. Surely that which seems good in the sight of God must be holy, and wise, and good in itself. How vain and presumptuous is blinded man, that would dare to reply against his Maker, to charge his holiness with injustice, his wisdom with mistake, his goodness with partiality? All their vain cavils will be silenced at the great day, when the secrets of all hearts are opened, and God will be justified when he condemns. However, though we dare not venture too far into the depths of the divine counsels, yet, from the light he has afforded us in his word, we may, in our feeble manner, assert and prove, that his ways are just and equal: and, besides the argument of his sovereignty, 'that so it has pleased him,' he has been pleased to favour us with some of the reasons 'why it has so pleased him.' And this is the subject I propose to lead your meditations to, from these words. May his Spirit assist me, that I may not darken counsel by words without knowledge.

Let us begin with inquiring, What might be his principal ends in sending his Son into the world, that we might have life through him? These I apprehend were chiefly two.

1. The redemption and complete salvation of all that believe. All mankind are by nature in the same state of sin and misery. But we are told, that at the great day there will be an unspeakable difference in the circumstances between some and others. Many will then stand trembling at his left hand, to whom the King shall say, 'Depart.' But those on the right hand will hear those joyful words, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' If you ask, To what is this difference primarily owing? The answer is provided: 'Jesus loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood; he redeemed them out of every nation, and people, and language; they came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne.' It was then for their sakes, who should be hereafter found at the right hand of God, that 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'

2. But, besides this, God had another and a still higher end in the work of redemption, namely, the manifestation of his own glory. It was unspeakable love to us that he provided the means of salvation at all: and we cannot wonder, much less ought we to complain, that, in justice to himself, he appointed such means, and such a way, as that all the praise and glory of the contrivance should in the end redound to himself alone. In order to

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this, it was necessary that the following things should be manifested with the fullest evidence.

1st. The greatness of man's depravity, guilt, and misery: that it was not a small thing, but a case worthy the interposition of almighty power and infinite grace.

2dly. The utter insufficiency of man to relieve himself; that so God might have the whole honour of his recovery, and we might be for ever debtors to his free, undeserved mercy.

3dly. That whereas there are, to outward appearance, a great variety of characters among mankind, it was necessary the dispensation of his grace should be so conducted as to show that no case was too hard for his power, or too low and miserable for his compassion and condescension.

Upon these grounds we may see something of his wisdom in the methods he has appointed, and in the subjects of his choice; why it has seemed good in his sight to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes; for such reasons as these:—

1. To stain the pride of all human glory.
2. To exclude every pretence of boasting.
3. That there might be a ground of hope provided for the vilest and meanest.
4. That the salvation of believers might be sure, and not subject to miscarry.

I. The Lord of hosts hath proposed it, 'to stain the pride of all human glory.'* How much men are disposed to admire their own wisdom, learning, and fancied accomplishments, is sufficiently obvious. But now the pride of all this glory is stained, inasmuch as it is proved by experience to be utterly useless in the most important concerns. One man has talents to rule a kingdom; but is himself a slave to the vilest lusts and passions. Another has courage to face death in a field of battle; yet, with regard to religion, is a mere coward: overawed by the feeble breath of the multitude, he is both ashamed and afraid to practise what his conscience convinces him is his duty. Another almost pretends to count the number of the stars, and to call them all by their names; yet has no more thought of the God that made the heavens and the earth, than the beasts that perish. Another delights in books and languages which few can understand but himself; nothing so false or foolish but he accounts it worth his study, if it has but the stamp of antiquity to recommend it; only the book of God, (though much more ancient than all his fables,) because it may be read in plain English, is thrown by

*Isa. xxiii. 9.

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as unworthy his notice. Another who professes to be Scripture-wise, perverts the Scripture, and abuses his own reason, to establish the most absurd errors, or to overturn the plainest truths. Another amuses himself with setting forth the praises of virtue and morality, while his own conduct furnishes a standing proof, either of the weakness of his scheme, or the insincerity of his heart. Time would fail to recount all the achievements of these wise and prudent men. But behold the pride of them all stained. In the midst of all their acquisitions and inventions, they are strangers to God, to themselves, and to peace; they are without Christ, and without hope; those things which alone are of real importance, are hid from their eyes. Here the desperate depravity and deceitfulness of the heart are manifested to the glory of God; and it is clearly seen, that if he does not interpose to save, men are wholly unable to save themselves.

II. To exclude boasting. 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded.' As the apostle speaks in another place, 'If Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory:'* so if men were saved either in whole, or in part, by their own wisdom and prudence, they might, in the same degree, ascribe the glory and praise to themselves. They might say, My own power and wisdom gave me this; and thus God would be robbed of the honour due to his name. But now this is prevented. The word of the Lord is, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.'† For whatever outward advantages some may seem to possess, as to the things of God, they stand altogether upon a level with the meanest. These things cannot be understood by any sagacity on our parts, but must be revealed by the Father of lights. What could be done in this way, you may collect from St. Paul's representation in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Many of the Heathens were eminent for wisdom and abilities, and made great proficiency in science; but with regard to the knowledge of God, the result of all their researches was error, superstition, and idolatry; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and their disquisitions had no other effect than to leave them without excuse. Their practice (as will always be the case) was correspondent to their principles; and, in the midst of a thousand refinements in theory, they were abandoned to the grossest and most detestable vices. If it be said, these had not the light of revelation, we may observe the same or similar effects where the

* Rom. iv. 2. † Jer. ix. 23, 24.

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Gospel is known. With this superior light men are still equally vain in their imaginations; and, though they do not pay an outward and formal worship to stocks and stones, they are gross idolaters; for they serve, love, and trust the creature more than the Creator. When there is a difference, it is owing to grace, and grace is acknowledged. Such will readily say, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.'* Thus all pretence to boasting is effectually excluded; and he that can glory upon good grounds, must glory only in the Lord.

If it should be supposed that this representation of things tends to discourage a diligent and serious inquiry after truth, I answer, when rightly understood, it will have just the contrary effect. What can be more suited to excite diligence, than to point out the method in which it will assuredly be crowned with success? You cannot succeed without the light and assistance of the Holy Spirit; but if, conscious of this, and aware of your own insufficiency, you will seek his direction and guidance by humble prayer, it shall be afforded you. If you know this, you will certainly be wearied in the end by repeated disappointments; but if you depend upon his teaching and co-operation in the use of the means he has appointed, your knowledge shall advance as the growing light.

III. This method of the divine procedure opens a door of hope to the vilest and the meanest. Let not any be cast down on account of any peculiar incapacity or difficulty in their case. If none but the wise and the learned, the rich, and those who are esteemed well-behaved and virtuous, could be saved; or if these stood in a fairer way for it than others, the greatest part of mankind might give up hope, and sit down in despair at once. But the case is exactly the reverse. It is true, the persons I am speaking of are not the worse for these distinctions, whenever they are sensible how vain and insufficient they are, and betake themselves, as poor, helpless, miserable, blind, and naked, to flee for refuge to the mercy of God in Christ. But, alas! their supposed qualifications too often harden them to reject the counsel of God against themselves. They think themselves whole, and therefore see not the necessity or value of the physician. You who are sensible you have nothing of your own to trust to, take encouragement; the Lord has suited his Gospel to your circumstances.

1. Are ye poor? The Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified the state of poverty by taking it on himself. He had no where to lay his head. He will not, therefore, despise you on this account.

* Psalm cxv. 1.

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Only pray that you may likewise be poor in spirit. He looks through all outward distinctions, and often passes by a palace to make his presence and power known in a mud-walled cottage. Perhaps he appointed this state in mercy to your souls, that you might not be distracted with many things, nor take up with a portion in this world. You cannot be in a lower or more afflicted state than Lazarus, who, while he lay neglected at the rich man's gate, oppressed with want, and full of sores, was a child of God, and the charge of angels.

2. Are you ignorant? If you cannot read, you miss indeed a considerable advantage which you might derive from the perusal of his good word, and I would wish you to attain it if practicable. If not, give so much more diligent attention to the preaching of the Gospel; entreat others to read the Scripture to you. But especially pray. The Lord can teach you without a book, and make up for every defect. It is very possible for you to attain to know and love God, to love your neighbour, to rejoice in Christ, to keep his precepts, to be content with your station, to live by faith, and to die with comfort, though you cannot distinguish one letter from another. The prophet Isaiah, in the prospect of Gospel times, gives a description of the way of salvation, which is peculiarly suited for your comfort: 'And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

3. Have you been notorious open sinners? Then you are in the less danger of trusting to your own righteousness. And as to the rest, if you are sick of sin, if you sincerely desire to be freed, as well from the power as from the guilt of it, you stand as fair for salvation as the most sober and regular person upon the earth. St. Paul, speaking to those who had been partakers of the saving grace of God, after he had made an enumeration of the blackest sins which man can be guilty of, adds, 'And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'†

IV. In this way the salvation of believers is sure. If it depended on any thing in man, it might miscarry. Man's boasted wisdom is soon changed. A few hours of a fever, a small blow on the head, may change a wise man into a fool. 'But it is of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed.'‡ Adam had a stock of wisdom, yet when he was trusted with his own happiness, he could not preserve it. But the second Adam is all-sufficient. Our dependence is upon him. To those who are babes, he is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and all

*Isa. xxxv. 8. † 1 Cor. vi. 11. ‡ Rom. iv. 16.

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that they want. If this concern had been left to the wisdom of man, it is most probable that Christ would have lived and died in vain, without a single real disciple. But now the dispensation of grace is in his hands, we are sure that some will believe in him; and we are, likewise, sure, that those who truly do so shall never be ashamed of their hope.

Now, from what has been said,

1. Inquire what is the temper of your minds with regard to this appointment. Our Lord rejoiced in it as the wise and holy will, the good pleasure of his heavenly Father. If you are displeased at it, is it not a proof that you have not the mind which was in Christ Jesus? If God *wills* one thing, and you *will* another, where must the contention end? To what purpose, or with what pretence can you use that expression in the Lord's prayer, 'Thy will be done,' when, in effect, your hearts rise with enmity against it? This is one topic from whence we may confirm the declaration of Scripture, that man, by nature, is not only a transgressor of the law, but an enemy, yea, enmity itself, against God.* They may pay some profession of regard to the power that made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water, while they worship they know not what, according to their own vain and dark imaginations. But the attributes and characters of God revealed in Scripture, his holiness, justice, truth, and sovereignty, they cannot bear. They are enemies to the declared strictness of his moral government, and enemies to the methods by which he has proposed to communicate his grace. But he is God, and who can control him? Who can say unto him, What hast thou done? You must either submit to his golden sceptre in time, or his rod of iron will fall upon you for ever.

2, Does it not appear, from hence, that the doctrine of free sovereign grace is rather an encouragement to awakened and broken-hearted sinners than otherwise? If you are most unworthy of mercy, and destitute of every plea, should you not be glad to hear that the Lord does not expect worthiness in those whom he saves; but that he himself has provided the only plea, which he will accept, and a plea which cannot be over-ruled, the righteousness and meditation of his well-beloved Son?

* Rom. viii. 7.

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SERMON VI.

OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

THE two preceding verses have led us to consider grace (if I may so speak) in the unfathomable depths of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. In this verse, our Lord calls us to the contemplation of his own glorious person, authority, and fulness. In him grace is treasured up, as in a repository for communication, to be dispensed to needy, perishing sinners.

When an ambassador is deputed from an earthly prince, to transact some concern of great importance, he produces his commission and authority, without which, all he could propose would be little regarded; and those are most honoured and attended to, who are intrusted with full powers, that is, with a liberty to act and propose as occasions offer, without further instructions, and with full security that the king will ratify and confirm whatever they agree to, in the same manner as if he had done it in his own person. Thus (if we may presume to compare small things with great) our Lord Jesus Christ, the great messenger of the Father's love, before he invites every weary, heavy-laden sinner to come to him, with a gracious assurance that he will receive, and pardon, and save them all, he condescends, in this verse, (as it were) to open his commission, to instruct us in his own personal dignity, and to communicate to us the ample and unlimited authority which he has received from God to treat with rebels. He knows what hearts of unbelief we have; how greatly an awakened conscience is terrified with guilt; how busy Satan is to urge us to question either his ability or his willingness to save; and, therefore, he would leave nothing undone that might encourage us to come to him and find rest for our souls. May his gracious Spirit enable me to speak aright, and so open your hearts to understand what may be said upon this high subject, that we may have joy and peace in believing.

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The words contain a threefold declaration.

1. Of his person: 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.'

2. Of his authority: 'All things are delivered to me of my Father.'

3. Of his office: summarily intimated in the expression, 'He in whomsoever the Son will reveal him.'

To treat these points in their proper extent, would be a subject more than equal to the abilities and life of man. Much would be left unsaid at last. We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. This is a theme fit for an angel's tongue; the most exalted angel, or all the angels in heaven, would be unable to comprehend it, for it is infinite, as our text declares. None knows the Son but the Father. Here we are too prone to think highly of our own knowledge; but when we arrive in yonder world of light, to see him *as he is*, we shall be ashamed of the highest conceptions we had of him, and of our most laboured attempts to express them, while we were imprisoned in this distant land. Then we shall say, with the queen of Sheba, 'Behold, the half, the thousandth part, was not told us.' In the mean time he is pleased to accept our imperfect stammerings, to assist our feeble inquiries, and does not disdain (as he justly might) to hear us take his name upon our polluted lips.

I. The inconceivable dignity of his person is pointed out by two expressions.

1. 'No man (or, rather, as it might be rendered here, and in many other places, *No one*,*) knoweth the Son, but the Father.' No one—

First. Not the wisest man in a state of nature. Various degrees of knowledge there are amongst the sons of men. There is a great difference between man and man; between one who knows not his letters, or any thing beyond the bounds of his own village; and another who has a large acquaintance with arts and sciences, history and languages, and has surveyed the manners and boundaries of many nations. But, with regard to the knowledge of Christ, the philosopher and the shepherd, the king and the beggar, are just upon a level. Of two blind men, one may know many things more than the other; but with regard to the knowledge of light and colours, they will be both ignorant alike.

Some of you, perhaps, think yourselves wiser than many of your neighbours. But I cannot too often remind you, that if

* Ουδεις.

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you know not Christ, all your wisdom is folly, and you will find it so at last.

Secondly, Neither do his own people know him in the sense of my text. Some knowledge of him, indeed they have, which is their differencing character from the world. But how small a portion! That they know him and trust him a little, is plain, because they love him and trust him; but how little, is plain likewise, because their love is so faint, and their trust so feeble. Their doubts, fears, complaints, and backslidings, are so many mournful proofs that they are but poorly acquainted with him; and sufficiently evidence, that a great part of what we account our knowledge, is not real and experimental, but notional only. The literal sense of what we read concerning Jesus, is attainable by study and human teaching; but the spiritual import can be received only from Him who teaches to the heart, who increases it in us by the various exercises and dispensations we pass through; and the best have much more to learn than they have already attained. There are, indeed, happy moments when he manifests himself to the eye of faith, in his glory, and in his love; as he did to Peter in the mount, and to Thomas, when a sight of his wounds conquered his unbelief, and made him, in a transport of joy, cry out, 'My Lord, and my God.' But these visits, though they have a powerful influence to conquer sin and fear, are transient; and when the cause is withdrawn, there is a proportionable abatement in the effect. The knowledge of Christ, in the present life, may be compared to the knowledge which a shepherd has of the sea, from having viewed it from the top of a cliff. In a sense it may be said, he has seen the sea; but how little has he seen, in comparison of what lies beyond the reach of his eye! How inadequate is such a prospect to give him an idea answerable to the length, and breadth, and depth, of the immense ocean! Nay, further,

Thirdly, The glorified saints and holy angels, who behold as much of his glory as creatures can bear, do not know him as he is. They are filled with his power and love. He comprehends them, but they cannot him. A vessel cast into the sea can but receive according to its capacity. Thus are they filled with his fulness till they can hold no more; but his glory still remains infinite and boundless. The glorious seraphim, therefore, are represented as hiding *their faces* with their wings, unable to bear the splendour of his presence. For,

Fourthly, 'None knows the Son but the Father.' This proves his divinity. God only knows himself. The Son is his eternal Word, his eternal Wisdom, and therefore beyond the highest reach of finite understanding.

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2. 'None knows the Father but the Son.' Here I might repeat the former particulars. God has made something known of himself in his works, much in his word, more still in his grace. All men have some faint perceptions of his power and presence. He manifests himself to his own family below, still more to his family above; yet, after all, he is said to dwell in light which no man can approach. None knows him but the Son, and he knows him perfectly, knows the incomprehensible God; therefore he is God himself. As he said to Philip, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.'*

Now, if we had no other proof of this doctrine but the passage before us, since this is the declaration of the true and faithful Witness, it should be accepted as decisive. But as this is the great mystery of godliness, the pillar and ground of truth, the foundation of all our hopes, I shall take this opportunity to confirm it more largely from other concurrent testimonies of Scripture.

By the Son, I mean the person who spoke these words; he who was foretold by the prophets; who in the fulness of time came into the world; who, with respect to his divine nature, is called 'the Word,'† and with respect to his human nature, was born of the Virgin Mary: he who was known upon earth by the name of Jesus; whose history is related by the evangelists; who suffered a shameful and accursed death upon the cross, without the gates of Jerusalem. Of him we affirm, 'That he was, and is, the true God, and eternal life.'‡ In proof of this, besides what has been already said, let the following particulars be considered.

First, That the proper and peculiar titles of God are attributed to him frequently in the Scriptures; so frequently, that it would be a very long task to transcribe them all. Let a few, the application of which to Christ is express and indisputable, suffice for a specimen; 'The Word was God:' 'His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us:' 'Jehovah our Righteousness:' 'The Mighty God.' In the same style he speaks of himself by his servants the prophets and apostles: 'Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.' 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.' 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Almighty.'§

* John xiv. 9. † John i. 1. ‡ 1 John v. 20.

§ John i. 1. Matt. i. 23. Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. ix. 6. Isa. liv. 5. Isa. xlv. 22. Rev. i. 8. 11.

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Amidst the variety of testimonies which might be adduced to this purpose, there are two which are peculiarly observable. The Psalmist expresses the majesty, power, and immutability of God, in these sublime terms: 'Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.'* Surely none can deny but this ascription must be incommunicably due to the Almighty: yet the author of the epistle to the Hebrews† applies these words directly to the Son of God. The other passage I intend is the vision of Isaiah, recorded in his sixth chapter; which not only proves the point in hand, but irrefragably establishes the doctrine of the Trinity. For the Lord of hosts, whom Isaiah saw and heard, is affirmed by St. John to have been the Son,‡ by St. Paul to have been the Holy Ghost.§ Isaiah, therefore, had a manifestation of what was afterwards in explicit words set forth to be the faith of the church, that 'there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.'‖

Secondly, His works upon earth were such as necessarily suppose a divine power. Who can control the elements, raise the dead, command the devils, search the heart, and forgive sin, but God alone?¶ If it should be said that many of his servants and followers wrought miracles equal to his, by a delegated power, and therefore this argument is not conclusive; I answer, There is an apparent difference in the manner of their working, which proves the disparity between them and him. They could do nothing but in his name, and by his power; they usually addressed themselves to him by prayer, and always ascribed the praise and glory to him.** But his power was independent, sovereign, and unlimited: 'He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' At the breath of his rebuke the raging tempest and the boisterous seas were instantly hushed into a perfect calm. The deaf heard his voice, and the dead came forth from their graves, at his first call.

Thirdly, His works of office can be performed by none but God. This might be proved concerning each of the offices he exercises in consequence of his high character as Mediator between God and man; but I shall speak only of two.

* Psalm cii. 25—27. † Heb. i. 10—12. ‡ John xii. 41.
§ Acts xxviii. 25. ‖ 1 John v. 7.
¶ Mark iv, 39. John xi. 43. Luke iv. 36. Mark ii. 10.
** Acts. iii. 12—16.

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(1.) It is his office to keep his believing people in this present evil world, to act* the part of a shepherd towards them, to supply their wants of every kind, to direct their steps, to control their enemies, to overrule all things for their good, and to be a very present help in every time of trouble. To execute this important charge, it is necessary that his knowledge, his compassion, his power, and his patience, must be boundless. His eye must be every moment upon all their cases at once; his ear must be incessantly open to receive the prayers of all people, nations, and languages; his arm must be continually stretched out to support so many that stand, to raise up so many that fall, to afford seasonable and suitable supplies, at the same instant, to the distresses and temptations of millions. If this is the office he has undertaken, and if he is acknowledged sufficient and faithful in the discharge of it, what more undeniable evidence can be given, that he has all the attributes we can conceive as essential and peculiar to the godhead? The provocations, defects, and backslidings of his people are likewise so numerous, so often repeated, and attended with such black aggravations, that if he was not God, invincible in goodness, unchangeable in purpose, if his mercy was not, as his majesty, infinite, he would be wearied out, and provoked to cast them off for ever. The great reason why he bore with his people of old, holds equally strong with respect to us: 'I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'†

(2.) The like may be said of the high office, character, and appointment he has received, to be the Judge of the world, of angels, and of men. For, besides that it is quite incredible that God, who is jealous of his glory, should intrust this most illustrious prerogative to any mere creature, it seems evident, at first sight, that no creature can be possibly qualified for the discharge of it. To the great and final Judge all hearts must be open, all desires known, and every secret disclosed. He must be intimately acquainted with the counsels and plans that lay hid in God from eternity; he must have a sovereign, comprehensive, intuitive view of every event, of every design that took place within the limits of time and creation; he must have unlimited authority to pronounce the decisive sentence which will fix the everlasting state of all intelligent beings, and uncontrolled power for the immediate and irrecoverable execution of his supreme decree. And what higher than this can our most laboured conceptions reach of the Almighty God? If it be said that Christ will act by a delegated authority; we answer, It is a contradiction to say that God *can*

* Matt. ii. 6. ποιμανει. † Mal. iii. 6.

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delegate his *omniscience* to a creature; and without this attribute, any assignable measure of wisdom or power would be insufficient. The power and fulness of the godhead must so reside in the Judge, as justly to denominate him to be 'God over all blessed for ever.'* And this the Scripture assures us is the case in fact. The man Christ Jesus, who is appointed the Judge of quick and dead, is so intimately and essentially united to and inhabited by the Deity,† that he is the proper object of our faith, as the true God, and eternal life.

Fourthly, The honours he claims from us afford a further argument for his proper divinity. He challenges our supreme love, obedience, trust, and worship: 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' 'That all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father.' 'My sheep know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life.' 'I am the light of the world.' 'I am the resurrection and the life.'‡ If we could suppose an apostle or an angel, speaking of himself in terms like these, requiring our unlimited dependence, and directing our hope and love to centre wholly on him, we might justly reject him as a blasphemer. How the apostles understood these expressions, and that they did not mistake our Lord's meaning, is evident from the behaviour of Thomas. He saluted his risen Saviour, 'My Lord, and my God.'§ Had his transport of joy carried him too far in giving this ascription to Jesus, he would, doubtless, have corrected him, and provided us with a caution against committing the like fault. For who that has tasted his love, and been made partaker of the power of his resurrection, can avoid adoring him with the utmost homage their words can express or their hearts conceive!

From hence we may take occasion to observe,

1. His wonderful condescension; that, for us and our salvation, he stooped so low, drew a veil over his eternal glories, and appeared in the form of a servant, to suffer and to die: 'though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.'‖ This was love passing knowledge, to pour out his blood, his life, his soul, for those who by nature and practice were enemies and rebels, disobedient to his government, and averse to his grace!

* Rom. ix. 5. † Col. ii. 9,
‡ John xiv. 1. vi. 53. v. 23. x. 27, 28. viii. 12. xi. 25.
§ John xx. 28. ‖ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

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2. What a blessed and glorious hope is set before awakened sinners! Add to the consideration of his person what we have yet to offer from the word of God concerning his authority and purpose, and say if these truths do not give sufficient encouragement to believe and be saved!

3. How awful must be the case of those who shall be found in final rebellion against him, and die in a state of impenitence and unbelief! Alas! poor obstinate sinners, that have stood out so long, will you still harden your hearts, and stop your ears, and rush (like the thoughtless horse in the battle) upon your own destruction? Do you consider whom you are opposing? 'Did ever any harden himself against the Lord, and prosper?'* 'Have you an arm like God? or can you thunder with a voice like him?'† Where will you stand, or what will you say, 'when he shall arise to shake terribly the earth? when he shall be revealed in fire, to take vengeance on all that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.'‡ O kiss the Son, throw down your arms, and fall prostrate at his footstool, lest his anger awake, and you perish without hope; for in a little time the great day of his wrath will be revealed, 'which will burn like a furnace, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.'§ Then will it appear that those, and those only, are blessed, who put their trust in him; 'For those who trust in him shall never be ashamed; but when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory.'‖

* Job ix. 4. † Job xl. 9. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 8.
§ Mal. iv. 1. ‖ Col. iii. 4.

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SERMON VII.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

WE have spoken something of the dignity and excellence of that Mighty One on whom our help is laid; and are now to consider,

II. The covenant-authority he is intrusted with to manage the great concern of man's salvation. He is not only infinitely sufficient, but divinely appointed for this great work.

Of this covenant there is express mention in many parts of Scripture, to some of which I have referred in the note.* It is styled the *covenant* of peace, the everlasting, ordered, and sure covenant. The power and efficacy of this covenant respected the future incarnation of our Saviour. He asserted his right, while in the form of a servant, in the words of my text; and to the same purpose are the words of John the Baptist: 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath delivered all things into his hands.'† But the full manifestation of it was deferred to the time of his resurrection, when, and by which, he was declared to be the Son of God with power.‡ Hence, before he left his disciples, he assured them, 'All power is committed to me in heaven and in earth.'§

The sum is, that our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of his divine nature, and his voluntary undertaking, in our flesh, to fulfil all righteousness for us, both as to obedience and satisfaction, is exalted in that nature wherein he suffered, to be the sovereign Judge and Lord of all.‖

He it is now with whom we have to do. The Holy God, considered without respect to the covenant of grace, is a consuming fire to sinners; and we cannot stand before him. But now he reveals himself; he dwells, as in his temple, in the man Christ

* Ps. lxxxix. 19. Prov. viii. 23. Isa. xlii. 1—6. compared with Matt. xii. 18—21. Isa. xlix. 8, 9. Zech. vi. 13.

† John iii. 35. ‡ Rom. i. 4. § Matt. xxviii. 18.

‖ Phil. ii. 6—11.

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Jesus. He has intrusted all his glory and all his grace in his hands; and to him we are to look, on him we are to depend, for all the blessings we need for time and eternity. For 'all things are delivered to him of the Father.' All things is a most comprehensive expression. We may distribute it as referring to all persons, all blessings, and all dispensations.

1. All persons are in his hands. Hence his sublime title, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'* He doth what he will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. Thus Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him.

1st. He is Lord over his enemies, and those that hate him. He rules them with a rod of iron, and so disposes their designs as to make them (though against their wills) the means and instruments of promoting his own purposes and glory.† They are his servants even when they rage most against him. He has a bridle in their mouths to check and turn them at his pleasure. He can and often does control them when they seem most sure of success, and always sets them bounds which they cannot pass. So he showed his power over Pharaoh of old: the haughty king's resistance only gave occasion for a more glorious display of the greatness and goodness of the God of Israel. So he humbled the pride of Herod, and gave him up, in the midst of his guards, a prey to worms.‡ And thus, sooner or later, all his enemies are brought to lick the dust before him.

2dly. But especially he is Lord of his own people. By nature, indeed, they likewise are his enemies, but he knows them all by name. They have been in a peculiar manner, given to him by the Father;§ he accounts them his portion, and he will not lose his own.‖ He knows where to find them, and when to call them; and when his time is come, one word or look from him can disarm them in a moment, and bring them humbly to his feet. How soon did he stop and change the persecuting Saul!¶ When they are thus made willing in the day of his power, he takes them under his especial care; and whoso toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. He guides, and guards, and feeds, and strengthens them; he keeps them night and day, waters them every moment, and will not suffer any to pluck them out of his hand, nor will he himself leave them or forsake them till he has done all that he has spoken to them of. He gives them, likewise, a new heart and gracious dispositions, suited to the honourable relation he has brought them into; so that they delight in his

* Rev. xix. 16. Dan. iv. 35. Isa. vi. compared with John, xii. 41.
† Ps. ii. 9. ‡ Acts xii. 23. § John xvii. 6.
‖ John x. 15, 16. ¶ Acts ix.

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precepts, and yield him a cheerful, habitual, and universal obedience, from the constraining sense they have received of his inexpressible love.

2. All blessings are at his disposal. Is not this a welcome declaration to awakened souls? What is the blessing you want? Seek to Jesus, and you shall not be disappointed. Hear his gracious invitation, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live.'* The promised blessings which he holds in his hands are the very same that the awakened, enlightened conscience must have, and can have only from him.

1st, Pardon. How needful, how valuable is the pardon of sin to those who know what sin is, what it deserves, and what a share they have in it! Such are incapable of taking comfort till they know how God may be reconciled, and sin forgiven. These are the persons to whom Jesus says, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.'†

2dly, Righteousness. By believing in him sinners are not only pardoned, but justified. They are accepted in the beloved, and accounted righteous by his righteousness imputed to them, which we are assured is unto all, and upon all that believe, without any difference or exception.‡ Hence his people adore him, and glory in him, by his name, *the Lord our Righteousness*. In him they possess a righteousness answerable to the demands of the holy law, have confidence and liberty of access to God at present, though conscious of innumerable deficiencies in themselves; and they shall stand with boldness before him in this righteousness, and not be ashamed in the great day of his appearance, when he shall come to judge the world.

3dly, Strength. The forgiveness of sin that is past would little avail, unless there was provision made for a continual supply of needful grace. Without this we shall quickly grow weary, yield to the force of surrounding temptations, till at length the latter end would be worse than the beginning. But now every sincere soul may be freed from this fear. The way of prevention is pointed out, and the success infallibly secured by that one promise, though there are many to the same effect, 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'*

* Isa. lv. 1. † Isa. xlv. 22. xliii. 25. ‡ Rom. iii. 22.
§ Isa. xl. 31.

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4thly, Healing. This is often necessary; for the spiritual welfare is not to be maintained long without wounds. Our great enemy is so subtle, so watchful, so well provided with temptations adapted to every temper and circumstance; and we are so weak, unpractised, and so often remiss and off our guard, that he will at times prevail to bring us into the dark, barren, backsliding state, despoiled of comfort, and oppressed with fears. But see what a good and gracious Shepherd we have: hear his comfortable words; 'I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.'*

5thly, Support under trouble. He has engaged to lead his people safely† through fire and through water. He gives them leave to cast all their care upon him, with an assurance that he careth for them. He has said, 'all things shall work together for their good; that his grace shall be sufficient for them; and that in good time he will bruise Satan under their feet, make them more than conquerors,' and place them out of the reach of sin and sorrow for ever. Besides the habitual peace which arises from the believing consideration of these truths, he has likewise peculiar seasons of refreshment, when he manifests himself to the soul in a way the world knows not of, and often makes the hour of their sharpest trials the time of their sweetest and highest consolations: 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ.'‡

3. All dispensations are under his direction. He is Lord of all and does according to his pleasure among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. He is the supreme disposer,

1st. Of those external dispensations which are distinguished by the name of *providential.*

(1.) Those that are welcome and prosperous are both his gift and his purchase. To his people they come free; but he paid dear for them. And this gives them their chief value in the judgment of those who know him, to receive them as the pledges and fruits of his redeeming love. When the blessings of common providence are received and enjoyed as the gifts of God reconciled in Christ, they are then, and not otherwise, truly comfortable. It is this thought enables the poor believer often to taste a sweeter relish and flavour in bread and water, than the volup-

* Ezek. xxxiv. 16.
† Isa. xliii. 2. 1 Pet. iii. 17. Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. xii. 19.
‡ 2 Cor. i. 5.

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tuary ever knew in the wasteful profusion and studied refinements of luxury. To be able to look back, and see how the hand of our gracious Lord has led us from our childhood, chose and managed better for us than we could have done, corrected our mistakes, and in many things exceeded our desires; to look round and see all our concerns in his sure keeping, who delights in our prosperity, and will suffer nothing to grieve us but what he intends to employ as means for our greater advantage; to look forward and see, that he has prepared still better things for us than ever our eyes beheld, or our hearts conceived—how cheering are these views! Those who are thus stayed upon the Lord Jesus, as overruling and managing all their concerns, are not terrified with every shaking leaf; 'their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord.'

(2.) Afflictive dispensations are likewise of his sending. And the consideration of his hand in them, the good he designs us by them, the assurance we have of being supported under them, and brought through them; according to the degrees in which these things are apprehended by faith, and accompanied with a humbling sense of their own demerits, his people submit to his appointment with patience and thankfulness, and say, after the pattern which he has left them, The cup which my Saviour puts into my hand, shall I not drink it?

In brief, it is he who appointed the time and place of our birth, and all the successive connexions of our lives. Our civil and our religious liberties are both owing to his favour; and in these he has been peculiarly favourable to *us*. 'He has not dealt so with every nation.'

2dly. The dispensation of grace. It is he who raises up instruments to preach his Gospel, appoints them their places, furnishes them with that measure of gifts and sufficiency which he sees requisite and best. And it is only he that makes their poor labours successful. He sends his word to some, and brings others to his word: and, in both cases, he so makes use of ordinary means, that to a common eye he seems to do nothing, when, in reality, he does *all*. He brought St. Paul to Corinth, and maintained him there a considerable time against all the efforts of his enemies.* He overruled the thoughtless rambling of Onesimus,† and led him by a way which he knew not, to the means by which he had appointed to bring him to the knowledge of himself. And these instances are recorded for our instruction, as specimens of what he does in the same kind every day.

* Acts xviii. 10. † Phil. 11.

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3dly. The dispensation of death. Our times are in his hands. He claims it as his own prerogative,* that he keeps the key of death and the invisible state. None can remove us sooner, none can detain us a moment longer, than his call. In this, likewise, he is little observed. We charge death to fevers, frights, and falls: but these are only the messengers which he sends. Sin has brought us all under a sentence of death; but the moment and the manner of the execution befall us according to his good pleasure. Till then, though his providence leads us through fire and water, though we walk upon the brink of a thousand apparent, and a million of unseen dangers, we are, in reality, in perfect safety. Having appointed St. Paul to stand before Cæsar, though the tempest greatly assaulted, and seemingly overpowered the ship he was in, St. Paul was as safe on the stormy sea, when all probable hope of being saved† was taken away, as Cæsar himself upon his throne. But when his time is come, in vain are all the assistance of friends, or the healing arts of medicines, to procure the smallest respite.

4thly. The dispensation of judgment. 'The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son;'‡ and has especially appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by the man Jesus Christ,§ whom he hath ordained. Then his glory shall be confessed by all. Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. Awful will the day be to those who hate him, when he shall appear in flaming fire, to convince sinners of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him.‖ They must give an account of all. Account, did I say? They can give none; but will be struck dumb before him, and hear, with horror, their dreadful doom, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'¶

But it will be a joyful time to his own people. The clouds of infirmity, affliction, and reproach, under which they are now obscured, shall vanish away, and they shall shine forth like the sun in the presence of their Father. God, even their own God, shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. They shall be glorified, and their enemies ashamed. What joy will fill their hearts when Jesus, the judge, shall own his relation to them before assembled worlds, and shall say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then sorrow and sighing shall be heard no more; but songs of

* Rev. i. 18. † Acts xxvii. 24. ‡ John v. 22.
§ Acts xvii. 31. ‖ Jude 15. ¶ Matt. xxv. 41.

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triumph and shouts of everlasting joy shall take place, and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

How are your hearts affected with this subject? Do you not expect that I should close it with a suitable word of application?

1. To those who are yet in their sins. Will you not tremble before this great Lord God? If these things are not so, if you can prove that we have followed cunningly-devised fables, go on secure. But have I not your consciences on my side? Do you not feel a secret foreboding that these are the truths of God? And dare you still persist? Do you not see that you are already in his hands? In a moment he could break you in pieces; yet he spares. He affords you one opportunity more. To-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice, lest to-morrow should surprise you into eternity, and the weight of unpardoned sins should sink you into the lowest hell. As he has power to punish, so, likewise, he is mighty to save. Believe his word and live. His obedience unto death is a plea with which you may approach the mercy-seat. He has power to take away your heart of stone, to subdue your enmity, to forgive your sins; and what he does he does freely, without money, and without price. You need not, you cannot mend yourselves before you come to him. If you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you obstinately reject him, you will perish under the most aggravated guilt, as sinners against the light and grace of the Gospel.

2. You that see your need of a Saviour, lift up your heads and rejoice. Is he not, thus qualified, able to save to the uttermost? Why should you keep back, when he bids you come unto him that you may find rest? Could you invent any invitations more free, more full, than those that are recorded in the Gospel? Can you desire any stronger security than the blood of Jesus and the oath of him that liveth for ever? Do you wish to know how other great sinners have succeeded in their application to him? Search the Scriptures, and read how he saved Mary Magdalen, the dying thief, the cruel jailer, the persecuting Saul, and many of those who were actually concerned in nailing him to the cross. Be patient, continue waiting on him in prayer, and you shall find he has not inclined you to seek his face in vain.

3. To believers I hope this is a comfortable theme. You see all your concerns are in safe hands. He to whom you have committed your souls is able to keep them. Jesus, who has all authority and power in heaven and in earth, vouchsafes to be your Shepherd. What then can you want who are at his providing? What have you to fear who are under his protection? Why, then, do you so often distrust, so often complain? It is because

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your faith is weak. Are you tempted to think you could place yourselves to more advantage than he has placed you, that you could do better without the afflictions he is pleased to send you, that you cannot spare what he takes away, nor do well without something which he withholds? Reject all such thoughts: they are highly dishonourable to your Saviour, and to your profession. Those who know not God *must* reason thus; but you have a covenant-promise, that all things are working together for your good. 'This is not your rest, it is polluted.' But you will soon be at home: and then, when by a clearer light you look back upon the way by which the Lord led you through the wilderness, you will be ashamed (if shame is compatible with the heavenly state) of your misapprehensions while in this dark world; and will confess, to his praise, that mercy and goodness surrounded you in every step, and that the Lord did all things well. What you will then see, it is now your duty and privilege to believe. If you sincerely desire his guidance in all things, labour to submit to it. The path which he has marked out for you is difficult, but he has trod it before you, and it leads to glory. The time is short. Yet a little while, and you shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

SERMON VIII.

THE GLORY AND GRACE OF GOD REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

THE love we bear to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the confidence we place in him, will always be exactly proportioned to the apprehensions we form of him. Therefore, 'to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him,'* are spoken of as inseparably connected. On this account the Scriptures are frequent and full in describing him to us, that we may have a large acquaintance with his all-sufficiency, and be delivered from our sins and fears.

* 2 Pet. iii. 18.

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An awakened conscience that sees the need of a Saviour, well knows that the person who can deservedly lay claim to its trust must have these three properties, power, authority, and intention to save. How these eminently belong to Jesus, we learn from his own words here. Power belongeth to him, for he is a divine person, the Creator, Possessor, and Upholder of all things. Authority is his, for all things are delivered to him. Thus far we have proceeded, and are now to speak of his intention or office, the design of his appearance, and for which he is authorized. This is intimated in the close of my text. We are therefore now to speak,

III. Of his office, summarily included in this one thing, *To reveal the knowledge of God.* 'Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.'

The knowledge of God here spoken of, intends something more than merely to know that there is a God. Some faint apprehensions of this all men have by nature. This great truth is so clearly manifested in the works of creation and providence, that any man would be greatly offended if he was supposed to be ignorant of it. But as it is one thing to know that there is a king over the nation, and quite another thing *to know the king*, so as to have liberty of access to him, and an interest in his favour; so it is in the case before us. Our Lord did not come to tell us that there is a God, (the devils know this, and tremble,) but to reveal to us such a knowledge of God as may stand with our comfort; to teach us how poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners may draw near to God with hopes in his mercy, and call him their father and their friend.

Now, besides the revelation of this knowledge in the Old Testament, which may be properly ascribed to Christ, inasmuch as he was the Lord, Guide, and Teacher of his church, from the beginning, and instructed Moses and the prophets in the things concerning himself—I say, besides this, (which was made at sundry times, and in divers manners, in a more dark and imperfect way,) our Lord Jesus, through his incarnation, has vouchsafed us a twofold revelation of that knowledge of God in which standeth our eternal life.

1. In his person.
2. By his Spirit.

1. In his person. In this respect he is said to be 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the* express image of his† substance.' That God is great, and good, and wise, appears in part

* Heb. i. 3. † Της Υποστασεως.

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from his works; but it is but a small portion of these attributes we can spell out in this way; and there are other perfections in God, of which we can gain no certain knowledge without a further revelation. But would we see a glorious display of the great God, let us turn our eyes to Jesus, and behold him, by faith, in two principal views.

1. As hanging upon the cross. Could we have seen this awful transaction, and been in a right frame of mind, we should naturally have asked such questions as these, Who is he? What has he done? Had we been told, This person, thus destitute and tormented, is the beloved Son of God, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; we must have further asked, Why, then, was he scourged, wounded, and nailed to the tree? Why are those barbarous men permitted to mock his sufferings? Why does he not deliver himself, and destroy his enemies? The proper answer to these questions includes a revelation of the divine perfections.

1st. Wisdom. We had deserved to perish, but his mercy had designed to save us with an everlasting salvation. Yet this must be in a way worthy of himself. Sin must be punished, and the honour of his broken law vindicated. How could this be done, and the righteousness of God made to harmonize with our peace? A wisdom astonishing to angels, is manifested in devising this wonderful means. No sacrifices* or offerings, no acts of obedience or mediation, which creatures could supply, would have been of the least avail when the injured majesty of God demanded a satisfaction. But the eternal Word, united to our nature, afforded a propitiation worthy of God, and suitable for us. Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin,† and brought in an everlasting righteousness, available for all those who flee to him, as the hope set before them, for refuge from approaching wrath.

2dly. Love. *God so loved the world.* If you ask, *How?* judge from this instance, words cannot express it. He so loved sinners, enemies, rebels, that, for their sakes, he abandoned and delivered up his beloved Son into the hands of wicked men, permitted him to be assaulted by the powers of darkness; yea, it pleased the Father himself to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. This is love without parallel, and beyond conception. We can only admire and say, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.'‡ When Jesus Christ, as crucified, is clearly apprehended by faith, then we have the most convincing, the most affecting proof that God is love.

* Heb. x. 4—7. † Dan. ix. 24. ‡ 1 John iii. 1.

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3dly. Justice. Wonder not that God's own Son is thus treated. He stands in the place of sinners, and therefore he is not, he cannot be spared. The words his enemies* use to his reproach, will, in the lips of his redeemed people, be an expression of his highest praise. Having undertaken to save others, and being determined not to give up their cause, it is, in that respect, absolutely impossible for him to save himself.

Again, this justice, which was once as a flaming sword, to forbid and exclude every hope of salvation to fallen man, is now engaged in our behalf. For since it has pleased the Father to charge sin upon his own Son, his wrath will turn away from all who believe. The immense debt is already paid, and justice will not exact it twice. From henceforth God is not only gracious and merciful, but† just and faithful in the forgiveness of sin, and declares his own righteousness in justifying the believer in Jesus.

2. The knowledge of God is made known in the person of Christ, if we contemplate him as *reigning in glory*. He is no longer a man of sorrows, oppressed and despised. He is now upon the throne. In him the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and from him, as light from the sun, the unsearchable riches of his goodness are communicated to indigent, unworthy sinners. All the divine perfections shine gloriously in him, as the God-man, the Mediator, who is exalted above all conception and praise, and doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

1st. Grace. The great God is pleased to manifest himself in Christ, as the God of grace. This grace is manifold, pardoning, converting, restoring, persevering grace, bestowed upon the miserable and worthless. Grace finds the sinner in a hopeless, helpless state, sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Grace pardons the guilt, cleanses the pollution, and subdues the power of sin. Grace sustains the bruised reed, binds up the broken hearts, and cherishes the smoking flax into a flame. Grace restores the soul when wandering, revives it when fainting, heals it when wounded, upholds it when ready to fall, teaches it to fight, goes before it in the battle, and, at last, makes it more than conqueror over all opposition, and then bestows a crown of everlasting life. But all this grace is established and displayed by covenant in the man Christ Jesus, and without respect to him as living, dying, rising, reigning, and interceding in the behalf of sinners, would never have been known.

2dly. Power. The whole creation proclaims that power belongs unto God. But in nothing will his power be more illustri-

* Matt. xxvii. 42. † 1 John i. 9.

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ously displayed than in the wonders of redeeming love! What power is necessary to raise those who are spiritually dead in sin, to soften the heart of stone, to bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion? Wherever his Gospel is faithfully preached, it is always confirmed by this accompanying power. How quickly, how easily, did he change Saul from a persecutor to an apostle? Again, how is his power illustrated by the care he take of all who believe in his name, affording to every one of them seasonable, suitable, and sufficient supplies in every time of need? So that his weak, helpless, and opposed people, are supported, strengthened, and enabled to hold on, and to hold out, against all the united efforts of the world, sin, and Satan.

3dly. Bounty. How glorious is Jesus in his kingdom! Exalted beyond all conception and praise; wearing upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, the name that is above every name; and having all thrones, principalities, and powers, obedient to his will, and adoring at his feet, But all his riches and honours (so far as their capacities can receive) he condescends to share with his people. He owns their worthless names, he permits them to claim the most tender relation to him, and to call him their brother, their friend, and their husband. Yea, he says concerning them, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'* To him therefore, we must look for the most astonishing and affecting display of the divine bounty.

Thus the knowledge of God is revealed in the person of Christ by the word. But great and important as these truths are, we cannot receive and understand them merely by reading. The Lord Jesus therefore has favoured his Church with a further revelation. That is,

II. By his Spirit. This was one principal fruit of his ascension and intercession.† With the promise of this Spirit he cheered his disciples when sorrowing under the apprehension of his departure. 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.'‡ The offices of the Holy Spirit, are various as our wants; he teaches, comforts, sanctifies, and seals the children of God; but he effects all these benefits by revealing the knowledge of God, as manifested in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

1. In convincing sinners of their lost estate, which is absolutely necessary to their deliverance. None, will prize the Saviour but those who feel their need of him. Two things are necessa-

* Rev. iii. 21. † Acts ii. 33. ‡ John xvi. 7.

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ry to convince man of his lost condition by nature and practice as a sinner; the spirituality of the law, and the sufferings of Christ; the one shows the universality of sin, the other its demerit. But these can be truly discerned only by the light of the Spirit of Christ. While St. Paul (who was never absolutely without the law) was ignorant of the law's spirituality, 'I was (says he) alive.'* I had so little knowledge, both of the law and of myself, that I trusted to it for righteousness, and vainly thought that I yielded it obedience, and grounded my hopes of salvation thereon. 'But when the commandment came,' when the spirit explained and enforced it in its full extent, as reaching to the very thoughts of the heart, and requiring an obedience absolutely perfect, 'then sin revived, and I died.' All my hopes vanished; I saw every principle, affection, and action polluted, and the corruptions which I supposed were tamed, broke forth with redoubled vigour. Again, though sin is declared to be displeasing to God and destructive to man, by all the evils and miseries with which the world is filled, and all the punishments which the righteous Judge of all the earth has inflicted on the account of it; yet the just demerit of sin is not to be learnt by the destruction of Sodom, or of the old world, but only from the sufferings of Christ, who has borne the curse for sinners. Nor is it sufficient to know, historically, that he did suffer, and how he suffered. Where these things are not known by the light of the Spirit, they are no more regarded than a worn-out tale. But where the Spirit of Christ reveals by the word, the nature, cause, and end of his sufferings, then sin appears exceedingly sinful. Nothing less than this can make the soul abhor it.

2. The Spirit produces faith in Jesus, as having once suffered, and now mighty to save. His blood, his righteousness, his intercession, compassion, and power, are presented to the soul in a light which bears down the objections of guilt, unbelief, and Satan. Then the wounds made by sin are healed. Then old things pass away, all things become new, all difficulties are solved, and God is revealed experimentally to the soul, as holy, righteous, and true, in justifying the believer in Jesus.

3. Those whom the Spirit thus comforts, he also seals.† He impresses the image of Christ upon them. Such is the power of the views he gives them of his glory, and they are transformed into the resemblance of their Lord.‡ Though the first traces of this delineation are faint and indistinct in the sight of men, yet they are perfect *in kind*. The Spirit impresses feature for feature, and grace for grace;§ and the chief thing he designs and

* Rom. vii. 9. † Ephes. i. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18. § John i. 16.

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effects by all his subsequent dispensations while the soul remains in the body, is to heighten and finish the heavenly signature. Together with this, and in the same degree, he seals and ratifies to their consciences an interest in all the promises of the Gospel; and by infusing into their hearts the temper of children, he gives them confidence at the throne of grace, enables them to cry, Abba, Father, and bears witness with their spirits that they are born of God. Thus God is revealed not only to them, but in them; and they are made conformable to him in whom they believe, in all righteousness, goodness, and truth.

Let me once more address,

1. Poor mourning souls. Are you seeking to Jesus? You have good reason: you see he is a mighty Saviour. He is furnished with full authority, and came expressly, on purpose, to save such as you. He assures you that none shall sincerely seek him in vain. Believe his word, and dismiss your fears. He has begun his good work by revealing to you your misery, danger, and helplessness, by leading your thoughts to himself. He will not stop here; he will, in due time, accomplish his whole commission, by revealing to you that knowledge of God in which standeth your present peace and eternal life.

2. Careless sinners. How greatly will your guilt be aggravated if you receive this grace of God, the Gospel of salvation, in vain? Do not your hearts tremble when you think of meeting the Lord Jesus in glory? Have you an answer ready when he shall ask you why you refused his instruction, and cast his words behind you? The light of truth has visited you, how long will you resist it? How long will Satan blind your eyes? To those who accept not his revelation of grace, he will be, ere long, revealed in flaming fire. O humble yourselves before him, while the hope of mercy is yet afforded; and pray for the Spirit we have been speaking of, that you may be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and made partakers of the knowledge and image of God.

3. Believers. This subject is the food of your souls. You remember when you had dark, hard, and uncomfortable thoughts of God; but you have seen his glory in the person of Christ, you have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God,* that you may know the things that are freely given you of God. You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.† Walk, then, as children of the light; remember your calling, your privileges, your obligations, your engagements. Let these all animate you to press forward, to endure the cross, to despise

* 1 Cor. ii. 12. † Ephes. v. 8.

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the shame. Let it not grieve you to suffer with Christ here, for hereafter you shall reign with him. The hour is swiftly approaching when you shall be out of the reach of changes and sorrow for ever. Then 'thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.'*

SERMON IX.

LABOURING AND HEAVY LADEN SINNERS DESCRIBED.

MATT. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

WE read that, when David was withdrawn into the wilderness from the rage of Saul, every one that was in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became their captain.† This was a small honour in the judgment of Saul and his court, to be the head of a company of fugitives. Those who judge by outward appearances, and are governed by the maxims of worldly wisdom, cannot have much more honourable thoughts of the present state of Christ's mystical kingdom and subjects upon earth. The case of David was looked upon as desperate by those who, like Nabal,‡ lived at their ease. They did not know, or would not believe, the promise of God, that he should be king over Israel; and, therefore, they preferred the favour of Saul, whom God had rejected. In like manner, though our Lord Jesus Christ was a divine person, invested with all authority, grace, and blessing, and declared the purpose of God concerning himself, and all who should obey his voice, that he would be their king, and they should be his happy people; yet the most that heard him saw no excellence in him, or need of him; their portion and hearts were in this world, therefore they rejected him, and treated him as a blasphemer and a madman. A few, however, there were who felt their misery, and desired to venture upon his word. To these he gave the freest invitation. Those who accepted it, found his promise made good, and rejoiced in his light. Thus it is still; he is no longer upon earth to call us;

* Isa. lx. 20. † 1 Sam. xxii. 2. ‡ 1 Sam. xxv. 10.

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but he has left these gracious words for encouragement to all who need a Saviour. The greatest part of mankind, even in Christian countries, are too happy or too busy to regard him. They think they deserve some commendation if they do not openly mock his messengers, disdain his message, and offer abuse to all who would press them to-day, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice. Even this treatment his servants must expect from many. But there are a few, like David's men, distressed in conscience, deeply in debt to the law of God, and discontented with the bondage of sin, who see and believe that He, and He only, is able to save them. To these labouring and heavy laden souls, he still says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' May his gracious Spirit put life and power into his own words, and into what he shall enable me to speak from them, that they may at this time receive a blessing and peace from his hands.

The text readily points out three inquiries :—

1. Who are the persons here invited?
2. What is it to come to Christ?
3. What is implied in the promised rest?

I. The persons are those who labour (the Greek expresses toil with weariness*) and are heavy laden. This must, however, be limited to spiritual concerns, otherwise it will take in all mankind, even the most hardened and obstinate opposers of Christ and the Gospel. For let your consciences speak, you that account the yoke of Christ a heavy burden, and judge his people to be miserable and melancholy, are not you wearied and burdened in your own way? Surely you are often tired of your drudgery. Though you are so wedded and sold to your hard master, that you cannot break loose; though you are so mad as to be fond of your chains; yet you know, and I know (for I remember the gall and wormwood of that state) that you do not find all that pleasure in your wickedness which you pretend to. So much as you affect to despise hypocrisy, you are great hypocrites yourselves. You often laugh when you are not pleased, you roar out your boisterous mirth sometimes, when you are almost ready to roar with anguish and disquiet of spirit. You court the friendship of those whom in your hearts you despise; and though you would be thought to pay no regard at all to the word of God, there are seasons when (like him you serve) you believe and tremble. And, further, what visible burdens do you bring upon yourselves? 'The way of transgressors is hard.'† Your follies multiply your troubles every day. Confusion and uneasiness in your families.

* Compare Luke v. 5. John iv. 6. where the original word is the same.
† Prov. xiii. 15.

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waste of substance, loss of health and reputation, discord, strife, sorrow, and shame; these are the bitter fruits of your evil ways, which prey on your present hours, and make your future prospects darker every day. Surely you are weary and heavy laden beyond expression.

But this is not the case with others. You avoid gross vices, you have perhaps a form of godliness. The worst you think, that can be said of you, is, that you employ all your thoughts, and every means that will not bring you under the lash of the law, to heap up money, to join house to house, and field to field; or, you spend your days in a thoughtless indolence, walk in the way of your own hearts, and look no further: and here you will say you find pleasure, and insist on it that you are neither weary nor heavy laden. I might enlarge on your many disappointments, the vain fears which are inseparable from those who live without God in the world, and the trouble you find from disorderly, restless, and unsatisfied passions. But, to wave these things, I say briefly, that if you are not labouring and heavy laden, then it is plain that you are not the persons whom Christ here invites to partake of his rest. And though you can rest without him now, think, O think what rest you will find without him hereafter! If you now say, Depart, he will then say, Depart. And who will smile upon you when he frowns? To whom will you then flee for help? or where will you leave your glory? O that it would please him to touch your hearts, that, as weary and heavy laden sinners, you might fall humbly at his feet before his wrath burn like fire, and there be none to quench it!

But to proceed: let us,

1. Explain the terms, what it is to *labour* and be *heavy laden*.

2. Show who are the persons that answer this description.

First, The persons are said to be,

1. Labouring, toiling, weary. This is not hard to be understood. Weariness proceeds either from labour or from weakness; and when these are united, when a person has much to do, or to bear, and but little strength, he will soon be weary. The case of some, however, is, that when they are tired, they can lay down their burden, or leave off their work. But these are not only labouring, fainting, weary, but,

2. Heavy laden likewise. As if a man had a burden, which he was unable to bear a single minute, so fastened upon him that he could not by any means be freed from it; but it must always press him down, night and day, abroad or at home, sleeping (if sleep in such a circumstance was possible) and waking. How would the poor creature be wearied! How could you comfort or give him ease, unless you could rid him of his burden? How

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desirable would the prospect of liberty be to such a one! and how great his obligations and acknowledgments to his deliverer.

Secondly. This representation is an emblem of the distresses and burdens of those who seek to Jesus, that they may have rest for their souls; nor can any truly seek him till they feel themselves in such a state. They may be generally comprised under three classes.

1. Awakened sinners. None but those who have felt it can conceive how sinners labour, toil, and faint, under their first convictions. They are burdened,

First, with the guilt of sin. This is a heavy load. When Jesus bore it, it made him sweat great drops of blood. It is true, he bore the weight of all his people's sins; but the weight of one sin is sufficient to press us down, if God permits it to lie heavy upon us. I suppose the best of us can remember some action or incident or other in our past lives, which we would wish to forget if we could. Now, how would you be distressed to have a person sounding in your ears, from morning till night, and every day of your lives, that worst thing that ever you did? Would it not weary you? This is a faint image of the convinced sinner's state. When conscience is truly awakened it acts this officious and troublesome part; but its remonstrances are not confined to one sin, it renews the remembrance and the aggravations of multitudes. Nor is this the voice of a man, but, indeed, of God, who speaks in and by the conscience. The poor sinner hears and trembles: then the complaint of Job is understood: 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'* Do you wonder that such a one can no longer take pleasure in worldly things? It is impossible, unless you could silence this importunate voice, that they can bear themselves at all. Nay, often it is so strong and urgent, gives them such a lively sense of what sin is, and what it deserves from a righteous God, that they are almost afraid or ashamed to see any person that knows them. They are ready to think that people can read in their faces what passes in their hearts, and almost expect that the ground should open under their feet. O how wearisome is it to be continually bowed down with such a burden as this!

Secondly, with the power of sin. Perhaps they were once in some measure at ease in this respect: they saw others whom they supposed to be worse; and, therefore, trusted in themselves that they were righteous. But convictions rouse and inflame our sinful natures. St. Paul exemplifies this by his own case before

* Job. xiii. 26.

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conversion: 'I was without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.'* He never was strictly without the law; for he expected salvation by obeying it; but he was without the knowledge of its spirituality, demands, and sanction: and while he remained thus, he was alive, that is, his hope remained good, and he was satisfied with his obedience. But when the commandment came, when its extent, purity, and penalty were brought home to his conscience, sin revived, and he died. He found all his pretensions to liberty, obedience, and comfort, were experimentally confuted by what he felt in himself. The more an awakened sinner strives against his corruptions, the more they seem to increase. This wearies him; for, besides the greatness of the toil itself, he finds himself weak, weak as water, weaker and weaker. And he is not only weary, but heavy laden; for this likewise is a burden which he cannot shake off. He sees that he cannot succeed; yet he dares not desist.

2. Those who are seeking salvation by the works of the law, are labouring and heavy laden, engaged in what is beyond their strength, and baffles all their endeavours. This may appear from what has been already said. It is a hard task to keep the whole law; and nothing less will either please God, if made the ground of justification, or satisfy the conscience that has any true light. Those declarations of the word, that 'cursed is the man who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them,'† and 'whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all,'‡ keep them in continual anxiety and servitude. The weakness of their flesh makes it impossible for the law to give a ground of hope; yet, they cannot lay down their burden, but are compelled to renew the fruitless task. I speak not of mere formalists, who go through a round of external services, without meaning or design; but all who are in a measure sincere, finding themselves still followed with a restless inquiry, 'What lack I yet?'§ Endless are the shifts and contrivances they are put to; but all in vain; for, what makes it worse, they always add to this burden many inventions of their own, as though the demands of the law were too few.

3. Those who are under temptation. It is a hard and wearisome service to be in close conflict with the powers of darkness. The leading branches of this exercise are,

1st. When the soul is assaulted, and as it were filled with insufferable blasphemies. When Satan is permitted to shoot these

* Rom. vii. 9.
† Gal. iii. 10.
‡ James ii. 10.
§ Matt. xix. 20.

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fiery darts, none can express (not even those who have felt them) the amazement and confusion that fills the mind. For a person who has received a reverence for the name and attributes of God, to be haunted from morning to night, from day to day, with horrid imprecations, so strongly impressed that he often starts and trembles with an apprehension that he has certainly consented, and spoken them aloud with his lips; this is irksome and terrifying beyond description.

2dly. When the foundations of faith and experience are attacked. Many who have thought themselves grounded in the truth, who have hoped that they had surely tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have in their first comforts been ready to say, 'I shall never be moved,* thou, Lord, of thy goodness hast made my mountain so strong,' have found themselves afterwards at their wits end, when the enemy has been permitted to come in upon them like a flood.† One black cloud of temptation has blotted out all their comfortable evidences; and they have been left to question, not only the justness of their own hopes, but even the first and most important principles on which their hopes were built.

3dly. When the hidden corruptions and abominations of the heart are stirred up. And perhaps there is no other way but this of coming to the knowledge of what our depraved natures are capable. Such things a season of temptation has discovered to some, which I believe no racks or tortures could constrain them to disclose, though but to their dearest friend. This subject, therefore, will not bear a particular illustration. The Lord's people are not all acquainted with these depths of Satan. As people who live on shore have a variety of trials, dangers, and deliverances, yet know but little of the peculiar exercises of those who go down to the sea in ships; so, in the present case, there are great waters,‡ depths of temptation, known comparatively to few. Those who are brought through them have more to say of the wonders of God in the great deep than others; and this is his design in permitting it, that they may know more of him, and more of themselves. But while they are under these trials, they are weary and heavy laden; and this burden they must bear till the Lord removes it. The help of men, books, and ordinances, is sought and tendered in vain, till his appointed hour of deliverance draws near.

These, therefore, convinced, striving, and tempted souls, are the persons to whom Jesus says, 'Come to me, and I will give you rest.' The purport of this gracious invitation we are to

* Psalm xxx. 6. † Isa. lix. 19. ‡ Psalm cvii. 24.

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consider hereafter. In the mean time, rejoice in this, Jesus has foreseen your cases, and provided accordingly. He says, *Come;* that is, *believe*, as he himself expounds it: 'He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.'* See how his promises suit the state you are in.

1. Are you heavy laden with guilt? The Gospel message is, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'†

2. Are you groaning under the power of indwelling sin? Hear his gracious words: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live.'‡ And to the same purpose his prophet: 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.'§

3. Are you striving in the fire to keep the law? 'Wherefore will you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' Forego the vain attempt. Is it not written, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?'‖

4. Are you in temptation? He that says, 'Come unto me,' has been tempted himself,¶ and knows how to pity you. He has power over your enemy, and can deliver you with a word.** Did he not thus dispossess Satan in the days of his humiliation? and if *then*, surely he is no less able *now;* for, since that time, he has gloriously triumphed over the powers of darkness.†† And as his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy; he has said, without exception, 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;'‡‡ and thousands who have been in your distress have successively found that promise fulfilled. 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'§§

* John vi. 35. † 1 John i. 7. ‡ John xi. 35.
§ Isa. xl. 29. ‖ Rom. x. 4. ¶ Heb. ii. 18.
** Mark i. 27. †† Col. ii. 15. ‡‡ John vi. 37.
§§ Rom. xvi. 28. Zech. iii. 2.

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SERMON X.

OF COMING TO CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE dispensation of the Gospel may be compared to the cities of refuge in Israel. It was a privilege, an honour to the nation in general, that they had such sanctuaries of divine appointment; but the real value of them was known to few. Those only who found themselves in that case for which they were provided, could rightly prize them. In like manner, the Gospel of Christ is the highest privilege and honour of which a professing nation can boast; but it can be truly esteemed and understood by none but weary and heavy laden souls, who have felt their misery by nature, are tired of the drudgery of sin, and have seen the curse of the broken law pursuing them, like the avenger of blood of old. This is the only consideration that keeps them from despair, that God has provided a remedy by the Gospel; and Jesus has said, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' If they could receive the full comfort of these words, and heartily obey the call, their complaints would be at an end; but remaining ignorance, unbelief, and Satan, combine in various ways to keep them back. Some will say, 'O that I could come! but, alas! I cannot.' Others, 'I fear I do not come aright.' Having, therefore, endeavoured to show you the persons chiefly intended here, under the character of those who labour and are heavy laden, I proceed to consider,

II. What it is to come to Christ. I have observed in general, that it appears to have the same signification with *believing* in him. But, that we may understand it the more clearly, let us inquire,

1. How those to whom he personally spoke these words, in all probability understood them?

2. How far their apprehensions of them are applicable and suitable to our circumstances?

3. Whether, as we have the same necessity, we have not likewise equal encouragement to come to him with those who were conversant with him upon earth?

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1. It does not appear that those to whom our Lord spoke in person were so much perplexed as many are now, to know, what *coming* or *believing* should mean; he seems to have been understood* both by friends and enemies. Many questioned his authority and right to exact a dependence on himself; but they seemed to be at no difficulty about his meaning. It certainly implied more than a mere bodily coming into his presence. He was surrounded, and even followed by multitudes, who never came to him in the sense of his invitation. To such, while standing about him, he complained, 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.'† Therefore, if we consult what is written of those who came to Jesus for relief, and obtained it, we may conclude, that coming to him implies,

1st. A persuasion of his power, and of their own need of his help. They knew that they wanted relief, and conceived of him as an extraordinary person empowered and able to succour them. This persuasion of Christ's sufficiency and willingness was then, as it is now, afforded in different degrees. The centurion spoke with full assurance: 'Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.'‡ The leper more dubiously: 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'§ Another, in still fainter language: 'If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.'‖ The faith of this last was, as the man himself acknowledged, mixed with much unbelief and fear; yet Jesus did not despise the day of small things: he pardoned his suspicions, confirmed his fluctuating mind, granted him his request; and his case is recorded as an instance how graciously he accepts and cherishes the feeblest effects of true faith: 'He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.'

Secondly. An actual application. This evidenced their faith to be right. They did not sit content with having heard of him, but improved it: they went to him, told him their cases, and implored his compassion. Their faith prevailed against all discouragements. In vain the multitude charged them to hold their peace;¶ knowing that he only was able to relieve them, they cried so much the more a great deal. Even when he seemed to discover a great reserve,** they still waited, and knew not how to depart without an answer. Nor could a sense of unworthiness, fear, or shame, keep them back,†† when once they had a strong persuasion of his power to save.

* John vi. 30. and xix. 36.
† John v. 40.
‡ Matt. viii. 8.
§ Matt. viii. 2.
‖ Mark ix. 22.
¶ Mark x. 48.
** Matt. xv. 27.
†† Mark v. 37.

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Thirdly. When he was sought to as a soul-physician, as was the case with many, whose bodily diseases he healed, and with others who were not sick, those who came to him continued with him, and became his followers. They depended on him for salvation, received him as their Lord and Master, professed an obedience to his precepts, accepted a share in his reproach, and renounced every thing that was inconsistent with his will.* Some had a more express and open call to this, as Matthew, who was sitting at the receipt of custom, regardless of Jesus, till he passed by him, and said, 'Follow me.'† That word accompanied with the power of his love, won his heart, and diverted him from worldly pursuits in an instant. Others were more secretly drawn by his spirit and providence, as Nathaniel, and the weeping penitent‡ who silently washed his feet with her tears; and this was the design and effect of many of their bodily and family afflictions. The man who was brought to be healed of the palsy,§ received the forgiveness of his sins; and the ruler who first came to Jesus with no other view than to obtain the life of his son,‖ obtained much more than he asked or expected. The Lord afforded such an affecting sense of his power and goodness upon that occasion, that he from thenceforth believed, with all his house.

2. These things are applicable to us. Jesus is no longer visible upon earth; but he has promised his spiritual presence to abide with his word, ordinances, and people, to the end of time. Weary and heavy laden souls have now no need to take a long journey to seek him: for he is always near them, and in a spiritual manner, where his Gospel is preached. Poor and inconsiderable as we are in the judgment of the world, I trust we have a right to claim his promise,¶ and to believe that he is even now in the midst of us. Therefore, come unto him; that is,

First. Raise your hearts, and breathe forth your complaints to him. Do you see your need of him? Be persuaded, and pray to him to assure you more strongly of his power and goodness. He is just such a Saviour as your circumstances require, as you yourself could wish for, and he is able to convince you in a moment that he is so. If he is pleased to cause a ray of his glory to break in upon your mind, your fears, and doubts, and griefs, would instantly give place.

Secondly. Persevere in this application to him. Set a high value upon these his public ordinances, and be constant in attend-

* Luke ix. 23—61. † Matt. ix. 9. ‡ John i. 46. Luke vii. 38.
§ Mark ii. 5. ‖ John iv. 53. ¶ Matt. xviii. 20.

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ing them. His eye is fixed upon us; his arm is revealed amongst us. I trust it is a time of his grace, and that every day we meet, he does something for one or another in the assembly. He has a fixed time for every one whom he relieves. He knew how long the poor man had waited at the pool side;* and when his hour came, he spake and relieved him. So do you endeavour to be found in his way; and not here only, but in whatever he has made your duty. Read his word; be frequent in secret prayer. You will find many things arising from within and without to discourage and weary you in this course; but persist in it, and in good time you shall find rest for your souls. These are the means which the Lord has appointed you. Converse likewise at proper opportunities with his people; perhaps he may unexpectedly join you, as he did the two disciples when walking to Emmaus,† and cause your hearts to burn within you. Further,

Thirdly. You are to follow him, to take up his cross, to make a profession of his name and Gospel, to bear contentedly a share in the reproach and scorn which is the usual lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, in the midst of an unbelieving and perverse generation. You are not only to trust in him as a priest to atone for your sins, but to receive and obey him as your teacher and your Lord. If you are truly weary and heavy laden, you will be glad to do this, and are crying to him to enable you; and you are likewise willing to forsake every thing that is inconsistent with his will and service. If you are desirous to come to Christ, it is not grievous to you to think of parting with your sinful pleasures and vain companions. Rather these are a part of the burden from which you long to be freed.

Come in this way, and you shall find rest for your souls. Are any of you thinking—O that I could!—surely if I had seen him and heard him, I should have ventured; but now unbelief and fear keeps me back. I observe, therefore,

3. That as we have no less need of Jesus than those of old who saw and conversed with him; so we have at least equal encouragement to come unto him. This I think will appear, if we consider that,

On the one hand, the bodily presence of Christ, considered in itself, had no peculiar or extraordinary influence upon those who saw him, but all was wrought by the power of his Spirit; the same Spirit which is promised to abide with his church for ever.

* John v. 6. † Luke xxiv. 32.

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1st. Multitudes who saw and heard him were unmoved and unconvinced by all the wonders of his love. Though he spoke as never man spoke, and went about doing good, he was slighted, opposed, and hated, even to the death. And those who know the heart of man, and believe that the carnal mind is enmity against God, will allow it highly probable, that upon a supposition he should appear again in the same circumstance of humiliation, and to use the same authoritative freedom in vindicating the commands of God from the vain figments, traditions, and customs of men, he would meet with little better treatment, even in those countries which are called by his name, than he did from the proud, self-righteous, unbelieving Jews. We may warrantably suppose there were many more lepers, blind, &c. in the places where he resorted, than those who came to him to be healed.

2dly. Many of his professed disciples, even after they had followed him for a while, turned back and forsook him.* We have therefore the less reason to wonder when we see any give up the profession of the Gospel, and return to the world again. It was thus from the beginning; and those who do so now would have done so if they had lived then. His looks, his voice, his gesture, and even his discourses and miracles, could not engage a single person to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, unless he was likewise spiritually revealed to the eye of their faith, as the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, full of grace and truth.

3dly. Even his true disciples, who were constantly with him, to whom he had personally made the most express and endearing promises, and who sometimes thought themselves assured beyond the power of a doubt, yet could not maintain their confidence longer than his spirit upheld them. To them expressly, though not to them exclusively, Jesus had said, 'I go to prepare a place for you,'† and I will come again to receive you to myself, that 'where I am, there ye may be also.'‡ When he had concluded that affectionate discourse, their doubts and fears were dissipated, and they could confidently say, 'Now we believe;'§ yet it was not long before they found his reply fulfilled: Jesus said unto them, 'Do you now believe? The hour is coming when you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.'‖ Will not this instance convince you of your mistake, when you think you could depend more on a voice from heaven than on the written word? The apostles had the strongest of assurance imaginable, the word of the Lord Jesus himself, face to face;

* John vi. 66. † John xiv. 2. ‡ John xiv. 3.
§ John xvi. 30. ‖ John xvi. 32.

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and yet this would not support them without renewed supplies of strength.

On the other hand, consider if the loss of his bodily presence is not more than made up to us.

1st. By the fuller manifestation of the Holy Spirit than was afforded before his ascension. The Holy Ghost was not then given in that clear and abundant measure as afterwards,* because Jesus was not yet glorified. While he was with them he was their Comforter and Teacher; but he told them, 'When I depart, I will send you another Comforter,'† whose office and abode with you will be in many respects so much more advantageous, that on this account it is expedient for you that I go away.

2dly. By the greater number and variety of promises which we enjoy. We have not only the Scriptures of the Old Testament in common with them, but to us the ancient revelations of the will and love of God are enlarged, explained, applied, and confirmed by the superaddition of the new.‡

3dly. By the experience of multitudes of all ages, people, and languages, who have gone before us, since their time: the cloud of witnesses to the truth and grace of God, the reality of eternal things, and the victorious power of faith, is now increased by the concurrent evidence of thousands and millions who have overcome all opposition by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony.

4thly. By the proofs and living witnesses of his power and grace amongst ourselves. Are there not many, with whom you worship and converse from day to day, who can tell you they were even dead in trespasses and sins, but he has quickened them. They were once as you are, labouring and heavy laden, they waited for him long, had a share in such temptations and conflicts as you now feel, were often at a stand, and upon the point of concluding their case to be desperate, as you may think yours at present; but at length they were enabled to come unto him, and they have found rest. Every such instance should encourage you to gird up the loins of your minds, to be patient, and hope to the end. As they have known your troubles, so shall you partake of their consolations in due time. What is it then should hinder you from coming to Jesus that you may find rest? What exceptions can your unbelief devise against the invitations, motives, and examples, which the Lord sets before you by his preached Gospel.

* John vii. 39. † John xiv. 16. and xvi. 7. ‡ Eph. iii. 5.

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(1.) Is it a sense of your load which makes you say you are not able? But consider that this is not a *work*, but a *rest*. Would a man plead, I am so heavy laden that I cannot consent to part with my burden; so weary that I am not able either to stand still or lie down, but must force myself further? The greatness of your burden, so far from being an objection, is the very reason why you should instantly come to Christ, for he alone is able to release you.

(2.) But perhaps you think you do not come aright. I ask, how would you come? If you can come as a helpless, unworthy sinner, without strength, without righteousness, without any hope but what arises from the worth, work, and word of Christ, this is to come aright. There is no other way of being accepted. Would you refresh and strengthen yourself, wash away your own sins, free yourself from your burden, and then come to him to do these things for you? May the Lord help you to see the folly and unreasonableness of your unbelief.

I have observed already, that coming to Christ signified more at first than merely to come into his presence: so, likewise, it means more now than to be found among his worshippers. Let none of you be deceived with a form of godliness. Examine your religious profession by this test. Have you laboured under a sense of your misery? Have you known the burden of sin? Has Jesus given you rest? Or are you earnestly seeking to him for it? If you understand not the meaning of these questions, you are not yet in that state to which the promises are made. And why are you not labouring and heavy laden? Are you not sinners? Has not the righteous God revealed a law? Has he not guarded this law with the sanction of a dreadful curse? Have you not transgressed this holy law in thought, word, and deed, times without number? If you have not, why do you join in the public confession, and call for mercy when the commandments are repeated? If you have, how will you escape the penalty? How, indeed, if you dare to neglect this great salvation? The law condemns you already; if you receive not the Gospel you must perish without remedy: for other name or means whereby men can be saved there is none under heaven. Once more you are warned of danger; once more the refuge is set before you. We preach Jesus, who came to seek and to save those who were lost; Jesus, who was wounded with whips, and thorns, and nails, that his enemies might be healed. Does not this thought affect you? Will you slight his love, despise his blood, and crucify him afresh? God forbid! Is there not some heart now relenting, beginning to feel impressions of fear, shame, and grief? Happy beginning! Obey the voice of God now opening

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in your conscience! Now is the time to pray; before, you knew not what to pray for: but now you see you want the blood of Christ, and the teaching of his Spirit. 'Ask, and you shall receive; and seek, and you shall find.' Take your warrant from my text; Jesus has said, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' Let your hearts answer, 'Take away our iniquity, and receive us graciously: Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; and in thee the fatherless, the helpless the comfortless, find mercy.'

SERMON XI.

ON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE REST OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE learned have a variety of arguments whereby to prove the Scripture to be the word of God. But though that kind of proof, which may be brought in a way of reasoning and external evidence, is doubtless useful upon proper occasions; yet, I apprehend, the chief and most satisfactory argument to those who are capable of receiving it, arises from the correspondence between the subject-matter of the Scripture, and the state of an awakened mind. When the eyes of the understanding are opened we begin to see every thing around us to be just so as the Scripture has described them. Then, and not till then, we perceive that what we read in the Bible concerning the horrid evil of sin, the vileness of our fallen nature, the darkness and ignorance of those who know not God, our own emptiness, and the impossibility of finding relief and comfort from creatures, is exactly true. We cannot but apply the words of the woman, and say, Come* and see a book that has told me all that ever I did, the ground of all my complaints, the true cause and nature of all the evil I either see, hear, or feel, from day to day. And as we find our disease precisely described, so we perceive a suitableness in the proposed remedy. We need a Saviour, and he must be a mighty one; but though

* John iv. 29.

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our wants and sins, our fears and enemies are great and numerous, we are convinced that the character of Christ is sufficient to answer them all. We need a rest, a rest which the world cannot give. Inquire where we will among the creatures, experience brings in the same answer from all, It is not in me. This again confirms the word of God, which has forewarned us that we shall meet nothing but disappointment in such pursuits, but there is a spiritual rest spoken of which we know to be the very thing we want, and all our remaining solicitude is how to attain it. From hence, as I said, we may assuredly conclude, that the book which gives us such just views of every thing that passes, must be given by inspiration from him who is the searcher of hearts. This proof is equally plain and conclusive to all capacities that are spiritually enlightened, and such only are able to understand it. We are now to speak,

III. Of this promised rest. And here two things offer to our consideration.

1. What this rest is?

2. How it is obtained?

1. The Greek word αναπαυσω expresses something more than rest, or a mere relaxation from toil; it denotes refreshment likewise. A person weary with long bearing a heavy burden, will need not only to have it removed, but likewise he wants food and refreshment, to restore his spirits, and to repair his wasted strength. Such is the rest of the Gospel. It not only puts a period to our fruitless labour, but it affords a sweet reviving cordial. There is not only peace, but joy in believing. Taken at large, we may consider it as twofold.

1st. A present rest. So the apostle speaks, 'We who have believed do enter into rest.'*

(1.) The common wearisome pursuit of the world is described, as 'spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not,'† wandering from object to object in quest of good,‡ but still mortified by incessant and repeated disappointment. We should pity a person whom we should see seeking some necessary thing day after day, which we knew was impossible to be found there. It is, however, the case with all till they come to Christ. Satisfaction is what they profess to aim at, and they turn every stone, (as we say,) try every expedient, to meet with it, but in vain. It is only to be found in him. When they come to him, their wishes are answered. This is exemplified by our Lord in the character of a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls,§ who was still upon the inquiry till he had

* Heb. iv. 3. † Isa. lv. 2. ‡ Ps. iv. 6. § Matt. xiii. 46.

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found one pearl of great price. This answered and exceeded his desires: upon the discovery of this one, he rejoiced to forego all his former acquisitions, and to give up every other possession or purpose, that he might obtain it.

(2.) I have spoken something concerning the wearisome exercise of a conscience burdened with guilt: but by coming to Jesus, and believing in him, an end is put to this. When we are enabled to view our sins as laid upon Christ, that those who come are accepted in the Beloved, that there is no more condemnation, but pardon, reconciliation, and adoption are the sure privileges of all who trust in him; O the sweet calm that immediately takes place in the soul! It is something more than deliverance. There is a pleasure more than answerable to the former pain, a comfort greater than all the trouble that went before it. Yea, the remembrance of the former bitterness greatly enhances the present pleasure. And the soul understands and experiences the meaning of those Scriptures, 'When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.'* 'In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.'†

(3.) There is likewise a rest from the power of sin. In vain is this sought from resolutions and endeavours in our own strength. Even after we are spiritually disposed, and begin to understand the Gospel salvation, it is usually, for a season, rather a *fight* than a *rest*. But when we are brought nearer to Christ, and taught to live upon him as our sanctification, deriving all our strength and motives from him by faith, we obtain a comparative rest in this respect also. We find hard things become easy, and mountains sink into plains, by his power displayed in our behalf. Further,

(4.) There is a rest from our own works. The believer is quite delivered from the law as a covenant, and owes it no longer service in that view. His obedience is gracious, cheerful, the effect of love; and therefore he is freed from those fears and burdens which once disturbed him in the way of duty. At first there was a secret, though unhallowed dependence on himself. When his frames were lively, he was strong, and thought he had something to trust to, but under a change (and changes will happen) he was at his wit's end. But there is a *promised*, and therefore an *attainable* rest in this respect; a liberty and power

* Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2. † Isa. xii. 1, 2.

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to repose on the finished work and unchangeable word of Christ; to follow him steadily through light and darkness; to glory in him *only*, when our frames are brightest; and to trust in him *assuredly*, when we are at our lowest ebb.

Such is the *present rest;* in different degrees according to the proportion of faith, and capable of increase even in those who have attained most, so long as we remain in this imperfect state. But there is,

2dly, A future rest besides and beyond all that can be experienced here: 'There remaineth yet a rest for the people of God.'* Faint and imperfect are our most enlarged ideas of that glory which shall be revealed. 'It does not yet appear what we shall be.'† Who can describe or conceive the happiness of heaven? The most we can clearly understand of it lies in negatives. It will be as unlike as possible to this wilderness of sin and sorrow where we are now confined. Here we are in a warfare, but then we shall enter into perfect rest.

(1.) A rest from all sin. There no unclean thing shall defile or disturb us for ever. We shall be free from sin in ourselves. This alone would be worth dying for. Indwelling sin is a burden under which even the redeemed of the Lord must groan whilst they sojourn in the body; and those who are most spiritual, are most deeply affected with shame, humiliation, and grief, on this account, because they have the clearest views of the holiness of God, the spirituality of the law, the love of Christ, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Therefore the apostle Paul, though perhaps in grace and talents, in zeal and usefulness, distinguished above all the children of Adam, accounted himself the chief of sinners,‡ less than the least of all saints,§ and cried out, under the disparity he felt between what he was and what he would be, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'‖ But we shall not carry this burden beyond the grave. The hour of dissolution shall free us from the inbred enemies (the inseparable concomitants of this frail perishing nature) which now trouble us, and we shall see them no more for ever.

Again, we shall be free from all the displeasing effects of sin in others. Our hearts shall be no more pained, nor our ears wounded, nor our eyes filled with tears, by those evils which fill the earth. Now, like Lot in Sodom, we are grieved every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked.¶ Who that has any love to the Lord Jesus, any spark of true holiness, any sense of the worth of souls in his heart, can see what passes amongst us with-

* Heb. iv. 9. † 1 John iii. 2. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.
§ Eph. iii. 8. ‖ Rom. vii. 24. ¶ 2. Pet. ii. 7.

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out trembling? How openly, daringly, almost universally, are the commandments of God broken, his Gospel despised, his patience abused, and his power defied. To be a silent spectator of these things is sufficiently grievous; but if (as we are in duty bound) we dare to stand as witnesses for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, we find the spirit of the first born. Cain instantly takes fire, and denounces war against all who should presume to say that we ought to obey and fear God rather than men. Invectives and ill treatment are the certain lot of all who openly and consistently appear on the Lord's side; and if they escape stripes and bonds, imprisonment and death, it is to be ascribed to the restraints of Divine Providence, and (as a means in our happy land) to the temper of the laws, and to the clemency of the powers under whom we live. These things often constrain the believer to say, 'O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest.'* Let us not be weary or faint in our minds: ere long this wish shall be answered. A glorious rest awaits you, where sin and sinners shall have no place, nor the alarms of war be any more heard.

(2.) A rest from outward afflictions, which, though necessary, and, under the influence of divine grace, profitable, are grievous to bear; but then they will be necessary no more. Where there is no sin there shall be no sorrow. Then, believers, God 'shall wipe away all tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'†

(3.) A rest from Satan's temptations. How busy is this adversary of God and man, what various arts, what surprising force, what constant assiduity does he employ to ensnare, distress, and terrify those who by grace have escaped from his servitude. He says, like Pharaoh of old, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will destroy.'‡ He follows them to the last stage of life, but he can follow them no further. The moment of their departure out of the body shall place them beyond his reach for ever.

(4.) A rest from unsatisfied desires. Here, the more we drink, the more we thirst: but there our highest wishes shall be crowned and exceeded; we shall rest in full communion with him whom we love; we shall no more complain of interruptions and imperfections, of an absent God, and a careless heart. Here, when we obtain a little glimpse of his presence, when he brings us into his banqueting-house, and spreads his banner of love over us, how gladly would we remain in such a desirable frame? How unwilling are we to come out of the mount? But these pleasing sea-

* Ps. lv. 6. † Rev. xxi. 4. ‡ Exod. xv. 9.

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sons are quickly ended, and often give place to some sudden, unexpected trial, which robs us of all that sweetness in which we lately rejoiced. But when we ascend the holy hill of God above, we shall come down no more; we shall be for ever with the Lord, never offend him, never be separated from him again. We shall likewise rest in full* conformity to him. Here we find a mixture of evil in our best moments; when we approach nearest to him, we have the quickest sense of our defilement, and how much we fall short in every branch of duty, in every temper of our hearts: but when we shall see Jesus as he is, we shall be fully transformed into his image, and be perfectly like him.

2. But how is this rest to be obtained? Blessed be God, in that way which alone can render it attainable, by such unworthy, indigent creatures. If it was to be bought, we have nothing to offer for it; if it was proposed as a reward of merit, we can do nothing to deserve it. But Jesus has said, I will *give* you rest. Our title to it cost him dear; he purchased it for us with his own blood; but to us it comes freely. Faith in his name puts us in immediate possession of the first-fruits, the earnest of this inheritance; and faith will lead us powerfully and safely, through all hindrances and enemies, to the full enjoyment of the whole. Faith unites us to Christ; gives us an immediate interest in all the benefits of his life, death, and intercession; opens the way of communication for all needful supplies of grace here, and ensures to us the accomplishment of all the Lord has spoken to us of, in a state of glory. 'He that believeth shall be saved;'† saved in defiance of all the opposition of earth and hell; saved, notwithstanding he is in himself unstable as water, weak as a bruised reed, and helpless as infancy. What Jesus will give, none can take away. Only remember that it is a free gift. Receive it thankfully, and rejoice in the giver. Let him have all the glory of his own undertaking. Renounce every hope and every plea but his promise and mediation. Commit your souls to him, and then fear nothing. 'The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'‡ He will fight your battles, heal your wounds, refresh your fainting spirits, guide you by his counsel while here, and at last receive you to himself.

May we not therefore say, Happy are the people that are in such a case! Happy they who have been enabled to accept this gracious invitation, who have already entered upon the rest of grace, and have a well-grounded expectation that they shall rest in glory! Believers, what should you fear, or why complain? Look back to where the Lord found you sleeping in sin, helpless

* Ps. xvii. 15. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

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and hopeless, yet insensible of your danger; look forward to what he has provided for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; a crown of life, a kingdom that cannot be shaken; think of the love, the sufferings, the glory of him to whom you owe these blessings; and let these considerations animate you to run with patience* and thankfulness the race that is set before you.

Happy, likewise, are you whose hearts are fixed upon this rest and this Saviour, though as yet you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The Lord will give you rest. Doubt it not, he cannot deny himself; wait his hour; though he seems to tarry long, yet maintain your confidence in his promise. Redouble your prayers, cry mightily to him, he will not (as perhaps many around you do) rebuke your importunity, and charge you to hold your peace. Look at the generations of old, and see, did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him?

And you who are yet strangers to rest, are thus far happy, that you are still spared, and have the Gospel continued to you. The Lord is still waiting to be gracious; he says to all, Come unto me and ye shall find rest for your souls. Do you not see this rest desirable? What rest, either here or hereafter, can you expect, if you remain in the service of sin? Why may not you obtain your liberty? You are no worse than others, either by nature or practice. Though you have been transgressors from the womb, you are not excluded if you do not exclude yourselves; though your sinful habits and inclinations are exceeding strong, he is able to subdue them. There is a power in his blood, and in that Spirit which he is exalted to bestow, sufficient to make the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots,† to soften the hardest heart, and to pardon the most aggravated guilt, and to enable those to do good who have been accustomed to do evil. Arise! he calleth you. O may he accompany the outward call of his word with the efficacious power of his grace, that you may this instant obey his voice, and flee to him for refuge? Whither can you flee else? Who but Jesus can save you from the wrath to come? Be wise and delay no longer. 'But if ye will not hear, mine eye shall weep for you in secret places.'‡ If you will not come to Jesus for life, you must die. If you are out of Christ, God is angry with you every day. The curse of his broken law lies heavy upon you whether you are asleep or awake, abroad or at home, at the market or in the church. The wrath of God is

* Heb. xii. 1. † Jer. xiii. 23. ‡ Jer. xiii. 17.

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revealed against you; if you turn not, he will whet his sword;* he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath prepared the instruments of death to smite you; he hath ordained the arrows of his vengeance against you; and can you, dare you go on in your sins, and say, I shall have peace? O may you be wise in time! 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'† 'Consider this, ye that forget him, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.'‡

SERMON XII.

OF THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

MATT. xi. 29.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

THOSE who are enabled to come unto Christ, not only experience a change of state, but of character, disposition, and practice. They are not only freed from condemnation, but they are made partakers of a divine nature. They are delivered from the slavery and yoke of Satan, and made willing, in the day of the Lord's power, to accept and embrace his yoke, which is commended to us in the following verse as easy and pleasant. Our Lord speaks of his service as a yoke or burden, because it is so esteemed by all who know him not. They account him a hard master, and think his service wearisome; but those who have made the experiment find it otherwise: though, it must be confessed, it exposes to some difficulties, calls for the daily exercise of self-denial, and will not admit either of competition or composition with the world, nor can it be pleasing to the unrenewed part of our nature. But the knowledge of his love, the hope of glory, and those seasonable refreshments with which he is pleased to favour those who come unto him, sweeten every bitter thing, and make them willing to bear his yoke and to prefer it to all that the world accounts freedom.

Let us inquire,

1. What is meant by the yoke of Christ.

* Ps. vii. 12. † Heb. x. 31. ‡ Ps. l. 22.

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2. The proper means by which we are enabled to take it upon us; that is, the believing consideration of him as our effectual teacher, and perfect pattern.

3. The happy effect of bearing his yoke: we shall find rest to our souls.

I. The yoke of Christ, taken at large, includes all that dependence, obedience, and submission, which we owe him as our rightful Lord and gracious Redeemer. He has a double right to us, 'he made us.'* We are the creatures of his power; he gave us our being, with all our capacities and enjoyments. And further, 'he bought us;'† he pitied us in our low and fallen state, and gave his own life, his precious blood, to ransom us from that ruin and misery which was the just desert of our sins. There is good reason, therefore, that we should be his, and live and cleave to him in love alone; that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. In particular we may consider,

1. The yoke of his profession. This is very pleasing to a gracious soul, so far as faith is in exercise. Far from being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he is ready and willing to tell all who will hear, what God has done for his soul. Many young converts, in the first warmth of their affection, have more need of a bridle than of a spur in this concern. For want of prudence to time things rightly, and perhaps for want of more tenderness mixed with their zeal, they are apt to increase their own troubles, and sometimes, by pushing things too far, to obstruct the success of their well-meant endeavours to convince others. But, though this is a fault, it is a fault on the right side, which time, experience, and observation, will correct. And though we are hasty enough to condemn the irregular overflowings of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of eternal things, I doubt not but the Lord, who owns and approves the main principle from whence they spring, beholds them with a far more favourable eye than he does the cold, cautious, temporizing conduct of some others, who value themselves upon their prudence. We should judge thus if we had servants of our own. If we had one who was heartily and affectionately devoted to our interests, always ready to run by night or by day, refusing no danger or difficulty from a desire to please us, though sometimes, through ignorance or inattention, he should make a mistake, we should prefer him to another of greater knowledge and abilities, who was always slow and backward, and discovered at least as much care to save himself from inconveniences as to promote our service. However,

* Psalm c. 3. † Acts xx. 28.

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this warm zeal usually suffers abatement; we are flesh, as well as spirit: and there are some circumstances attending a profession of the Gospel, on the account of which it may be with propriety termed a yoke to us, who have so many remaining evils within us, and so many outward temptations to call them forth. It will certainly stir up opposition from the world, and may probably break* in upon our dearest connexions, and threaten our most necessary temporal interests.

2. The yoke of his precepts. These the gracious soul approves and delights in; but still we are renewed but in part. And when the commands of Christ stand in direct opposition to the will of man, or call upon us to sacrifice a right hand or a right eye; though the Lord will surely make those who depend upon him victorious at the last, yet it will cost them a struggle; so that when they are sensible how much they owe to his power working in them, and enabling them to overcome, they will at the same time have a lively conviction of their own weakness. Abraham believed in God, and delighted to obey; yet when he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, this was no easy trial of his sincerity and obedience: and all who are partakers of his faith are exposed to meet, sooner or later, with some call of duty, little less contrary to the dictates of flesh and blood.

3. The yoke of his dispensations. This none can bear as they ought but those who come to him. It is natural to us to repine, to fret and toss like a wild bull in a net,† when we are under afflictions. Believers likewise find their flesh weak when their spirits are willing; yet they see sufficient reasons for submission, and they know where to apply for grace. Affliction is a touchstone that discovers what spirit a man is of.

The hypocrite may keep up a fair semblance of true piety while all things go smooth and to his wish, but in sharp troubles the mask will drop off. Satan proceeded upon this maxim in his contest with Job; and the maxim is a truth, though Satan was mistaken in the application.

II. The appointed means by which sinners are enabled to bear this threefold yoke, is suggested in the words, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' However amiable and desirable the disposition I have described may appear, you will never acquire it by any strength, wisdom, or diligence of your own. Our Lord, to prevent you wearying yourselves with unsuccessful efforts and needless disappointments, has assured you before-hand, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'‡ But here he graciously offers you the assistance you need. As if he had said, I know you are unable

* 2 Tim. iii. 12. Matt. x. 36. † Isa. li. 20. ‡ John xv. 5.

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of yourselves, but I will help you. Be not afraid of the prospect, but consider what I *can* do. To my power all things are easy; I can make the crooked straight, and the rough smooth; I can sweetly engage your affections, subdue your wills, influence your practice, and deliver you from your sinful fears. Consider, likewise, what I *have* done; thousands, who by nature were as unskilful and impatient as yourselves, have been made willing in the day of my power.

Therefore, *Learn of me.* Be not afraid to come to me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Great and mighty as I am, you may freely apply to me in every doubt and difficulty. Awakened souls, through a sense of guilt, and the power of unbelief, are backward and unwilling to come to Christ. They think, surely he will take no notice of such a one as I am. But observe how kind and condescending is his invitation; how graciously suited to engage our confidence. It was said of a Roman emperor, that those who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness; but those who durst not, were still more ignorant of his goodness. This was a false and impious compliment when applied to a sinful mortal; but it is justly applicable to Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. His glorious majesty may well fill our hearts with awe, and humble us into the dust before him; but his immense compassions, tenderness, and love, are revealed to overbalance our fears, to give us confidence to draw nigh to him, and an encouraging hope that he will draw nigh to us.

Again, *Learn of me.* I know the cause why these things appear so hard. It is owing to the pride and impatience of your hearts. To remedy this, take *me* for your example: I require nothing of you but what I have performed before you, and on your account: in the path I mark out for you, you may perceive my own footsteps all the way. This is a powerful argument, a sweet recommendation of the yoke of Christ, to those who love him, that he bore it himself. He is not like the Pharisees, whom he censured* on this very account, who bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers.

1. Are you terrified with the difficulties attending your profession, disheartened by hard usage, or too ready to show resentment against those who oppose you? Learn of Jesus, imitate and admire his constancy: 'consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.'† Make a comparison (so the word imports) between yourself and him, between the contradiction

* Matt. xxiii. 4. † Heb. xii. 3, *αναλογισασθε.*

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which he endured, and that which you are called to struggle with, then surely you will be ashamed to complain. Admire and imitate his meekness; when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; he wept for his enemies, and prayed for his murderers. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

2. Do you find it hard to walk steadfastly in his precepts, especially in some particular instances, when the maxims of worldly prudence and the pleadings of flesh and blood are strongly against you? Learn of Jesus. He pleased not himself;* he considered not what was safe and easy, but what was the will of his heavenly Father. Entreat him to strengthen you with strength in your soul, that, as you bear the name of his disciples, you may resemble him in every part of your conduct, and shine as lights in a dark and selfish world, to the glory of his grace.

3. Are you tempted to repine at the dispensations of Divine Providence? Take Jesus for your pattern. Did *he* say, when the unspeakable sufferings he was to endure for sinners were just coming upon him, 'The cup which my Father has put into my hands, shall I not drink it?'† and shall *we* presume to have a will of our own? especially when we further reflect, that as his sufferings were wholly on our account, so all our sufferings are by his appointment, and all designed by him to promote our best, that is, our spiritual and eternal welfare?

It is thus by looking to Jesus, that the believer is enlightened and strengthened, and grows in grace and sanctification, according to that passage of St. Paul, 'We all with open face,' or unveiled face, 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.'‡ The word of God is a glass in which the goodness and beauty of the Lord Jesus are manifested to the eye of faith by the light of the Holy Spirit. In this wonderful glass the whole object is not seen at once, but every view we take strengthens the sight to discover something not perceived before: and the prospect is not only affecting but transforming; by beholding we are gradually formed into the resemblance of him whom we see, admire, and love.

All those whom Jesus thus teaches to bear his yoke, find his promise fulfilled; they obtain,

III. Rest to their souls. Those who are truly awakened want nothing to make them happy but to be assured they have an interest in the Redeemer's love. Now this satisfaction is peculiar to

* Rom. xv. 3. † John xviii. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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those who take his yoke upon them, and are daily learning of him and copying after him.

For, 1. This affords the best and most unshaken evidence that he has begun a good work of grace in our hearts; I say the best, *because* the most unshaken. Many are greatly perplexed to know if they are truly converted; and are kept the longer in suspense, because they overlook the ordinary Scriptural method of confirmation. They expect to know it by some extraordinary sensation, suddenly impressed upon their minds. But, besides that there have been many instances in which this expected evidence has been counterfeited, and a groundless confidence has been placed in a delusion or vain imagination, (to the hurt of many, if not to their overthrow,) even when they are from the gracious Spirit of God, they are, for the most part, transient; and when a different frame takes place, the believer is often tempted to question the reality of what went before. I think, therefore, the testimony of an enlightened conscience, judging by the word of God, and deciding in our favour, that by his grace we have been enabled to take up the yoke of Christ, is in some respects a more satisfactory evidence that we are his, and that he is ours, than if an angel was sent from heaven to tell us that our names are written in the book of life.

2. The promise of the peculiar manifestation of his love* is made and restrained to those who walk in the path of obedience. If the discoveries the Lord is pleased sometimes to make of himself to the soul, are not the proper and direct evidences of a state of grace, they are, however, exceedingly desirable. Whoever has tasted the sweets of that water of life cannot but long for repeated draughts. When he lifts up the light of his countenance upon the soul, then is love, joy, and peace within, however dark and distressing things may be without. But this desirable presence can only be expected while we wear his yoke, and walk in his steps. If we turn aside into forbidden ways, if we decline, or dishonour the profession of his truth, we grieve the Holy Spirit, on whose communications our comforts are suspended; we give the enemies of our souls encouragement to assault us, and are in danger of falling from one wickedness to another, without the power of withstanding either the greatest or the smallest temptation, till the Lord is pleased to turn again to our assistance. In such a situation there can be no rest. 'But he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely,'† and findeth rest.

And true rest is no otherwise to be obtained. Those of you who refuse the yoke of Christ, well know in yourselves that you

* John xvi. 21. † Prov. x. 9.

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are far from rest. Your experience agrees with this declaration in the prophet: 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'* In what respect will you dare to pretend that you have the advantage of those who bear the yoke of Christ?

We allow the profession of the Gospel is subject to inconveniences; but surely not so many as you meet with who are ashamed, or afraid, or averse, to maintain it. If those who are of your household are not your foes on this account, yet we can see how it fares with those who live without the fear of God. How many, and how sharp, are your trials from disobedient children, unfaithful servants, false friendships, ungoverned passions, and unsatisfied desires! Nor do you save any thing in point of character, not even with those by whom you are most desirous to be esteemed. They cannot, indeed, reproach you with being a believer; but may they not, do they not reproach and despise you for being a drunkard, or a liar, or a miser, or an extortioner? And is this more honourable than to suffer shame for the cause of Christ?

Do the precepts of Christ seem hard? Certainly not so hard as that miserable bondage you are under to Satan, the god of this world, who works in you, and rules over you, at his will. He will not allow you to listen to the united remonstrances of conscience, health, interest, and reputation. But you are hurried on in his drudgery, constrained, like a mill-horse, to toil in the same tedious round of folly and sin; though you are aware of the consequences and wages before-hand. How absurd is it for you to boast of your freedom, while you are compelled to rush into present misery, and to dare your eternal ruin, with your eyes open!

And how greatly are you to be pitied under the many unavoidable afflictions of life to which you are equally liable with the servants of Christ! When your idols are torn from you, when sickness seizes you, or death stares you in the face, then how do you fret and pine! how many are your fears and alarms! Then you are your own tormentors. The review of the past affords you only shame and regret. If you look forward to the future, you are filled with foreboding fears and distressing apprehensions; you are weary of living, and afraid to die.

Why, then, will you continue thus, when Jesus says, 'Come unto me, that you may have rest?' O may he incline your hearts this day to hear his voice! Have you been hardened in your evil ways by a suspicion that your case is desperate, that it is now too late, and that he whom you have so often rejected will refuse you

* Isa. lvii. 21.

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mercy? Beware of such a thought: 'There is forgiveness with him.'* 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' He is gracious to pardon, and mighty to save; only acknowledge your offences, and throw down the arms of your rebellion. He is mighty to save, and no less willing than able. As yet there is hope; but who can tell how long his patience may bear with you? Take notice of that awful denunciation, 'He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.'† If you seek him to-day, with all your hearts, you shall find him. But who can answer for to-morrow? To-morrow, or to-night, your souls may be required of you; or, if your lives are spared, you may be given up to judicial and incurable hardness of heart. If his spirit should cease from striving with you, you are lost for ever.

SERMON XIII.

THE SERVICE OF CHRIST EASY AND PLEASANT TO HIS PEOPLE.

MATT. xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

THIS verse alone, if seriously attended to, might convince multitudes, that though they bear the name of Christians, and are found among the Lord's worshipping people, they are as yet entire strangers to the religion of the Gospel. Can it be supposed that our Lord would give a false character of his yoke? If not, how can any dream that they are his followers, while they account a life of communion with God, and entire devotedness to his service, to be dull and burdensome? Those, however, who have made the happy trial, find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced that there is no real pleasure attainable in any other way.

What the yoke of Christ is, we have already considered. It includes the profession of his Gospel, obedience to his precepts, and submission to his *will*, under every dispensation. But since

* Ps. cxxx. 4. † Prov. xxix. 1.

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it is confessed that a sinful nature and a sinful world will bring many difficulties, trials, and temptations upon all who walk in this way, it may be worth our while to inquire more particularly what there is in the yoke of Christ, that overpowers all these hardships, and makes such amends for every suffering, that, upon the whole, every believer will subscribe to this as a sure and experienced truth, that the 'yoke is easy, and the burden light.'

I. Those who bear the yoke of Christ, act from a principle which makes all things easy. This is love. It is said of Jacob, that when he served a hard master seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love which he bare her.* And many of you find it easy to do much for your parents, children, and friends, because you love them. But there is no love like that which a redeemed sinner bears to him who 'has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood.' Further, love produces the greatest effects when it is mutual. We are willing to do and suffer much to gain the affection of a person we regard, though we are not sure of success; but when the affection is reciprocal, it adds strength to every motive. Now the believer does not love at uncertainties: he knows that Jesus loved him first, loved him when he was in a state of enmity;† and that nothing but the manifestation and power of his love could have taught his hard, unfeeling heart to love *him* whom he never saw.‡ This love, therefore, affords two sweet and powerful encouragements in service.

1. A cordial desire to please. Love does what it can, and is only sorry that it can do no more. We seldom think much, as I have hinted already, either of time, pains, or expense, when the heart is warmly engaged. The world, who understand not this heart-felt spring of true religion, think it strange that the believer will not run into the same excess of riot with them.§ They wonder what pleasure he can find in secret prayer, in reading and hearing the word of God; they pity the poor man who has such a melancholy turn, and gravely advise him not to carry things too far. But the believer can give them a short answer in the apostle's words: 'The love of Christ constrains me.‖ His ruling passion is the same with theirs, which makes his pursuit no less uniform and abiding; but the objects are different as light from darkness. They love the perishing pleasures of sin, the mammon of unrighteousness, and the praise of men; but he loves Jesus.

* Gen. xxix. 20. † 1 John iv. 19. ‡ 1. Pet. i. 8.
§ 1 Pet. iv. 4. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 14.

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2. A pleasing assurance of acceptance. If we know not whether what we do will be favourably received or not, it makes us remiss and indifferent. But this animates the Lord's people; they are assured that he will not overlook the smallest services or sufferings they are engaged in for his sake. He has told them in his word, 'that if they give but a cup of cold water in his name, and on his account, he will accept and acknowledge it, as if it were done immediately to himself.'*

II. It makes a service still more easy and pleasant, if, besides acting from a principle of love, the service itself is agreeable to our inclination. Esau would probably have done any thing to please his father, in hopes of obtaining the blessing; but no command could please him more than to be sent for venison, because he was a cunning hunter, and his pleasure lay that way.† Now the believer has received a new nature; so that the Lord's commandments are not grievous to him; but he delights in them with his whole heart. It is true, he groans under remaining corruptions; and this is properly his burden, not the service of Christ, which he approves and delights in, but because he can serve him no better. So far as faith is in exercise, he rejoices in every part of the yoke of Christ. He glories in the profession of his name. He has made Moses's choice; he prefers the reproach even of Christ to all the honours of the world;‡ and had a measure of that spirit by which the apostles were enabled to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.§ He heartily consents to the precepts; he esteems them as a light to his feet; he makes them his meditation all the day. Nothing pleases him more than to find an increasing victory over the hindrances to his obedience; and the time of his greatest grief is, when through infirmity, or the prevalence of temptation, he is seduced to neglect or transgress them, though in the smallest instance, and in what does not pass under human observation. Even afflictions, though not joyous in themselves, but grievous, are cheerfully submitted to, because the Lord has appointed them, and is pleased to account them a filling up of his sufferings.‖

III. In other cases, even when there is a principle of love, and the service not disagreeable in itself, yet weakness may render it wearisome or impracticable. Though, perhaps, you would willingly take a long journey to serve a friend; yet, if you are sick, or lame, what could you do? But the yoke of Christ is light and easy in this respect, that there is a sufficiency of strength provided for the performance. This consideration makes every diffi-

* Mark ix. 41. † Gen. xxv. 27. and xxvii. 3. ‡ Heb. xi. 26.
§ Acts v. 41. ‖ Col. i. 24.

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culty vanish; for though these should be increased tenfold, yet if strength be increased in an equal proportion, it amounts to the same thing. What is hard or impossible to a child, is easy to a man; what is hard to flesh and blood, is easy to faith and grace. The believer, though weak in himself, is strong in the Lord: the power on which he depends is not in his own keeping, but it is treasured up in the *covenant* of grace, or in the Lord Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, and is always to be obtained by prayer. Every child of God is interested in the blessing of Asher: 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.'* By the *day* may be understood,

1. A day of service. Whatever the Lord appoints for us to do, if we depend upon him in the use of appointed means, he will certainly qualify, furnish, and strengthen us, for the accomplishment of it. If David is called out to meet Goliah, though he is but a stripling,† and the other a practised warrior from his youth, he shall not be disheartened or overcome, but be made a conqueror, though all appearances are against him. If we are in the path of duty, and if our help and hope is in the name of the Lord, we may confidently expect that he will uphold us, however faint and enfeebled we may seem to be to ourselves or others.

2. A day of suffering. If, like Daniel and his companions, we should be threatened with lions and flames, we may confidently commit our way to God; he can control the fire, and stop the lions' mouths.‡ While all things are in his hands, whose we are, and whom we serve, why should we fear that they will act beyond the bounds of his permission, or that he will permit them to do any thing which it is not his purpose to over-rule to our advantage? Such considerations in the hour of need, seasonably impressed by his good Spirit, together with a trust in his promises, shall inspire us with new strength to meet the greatest danger undismayed; and with regard to trials immediately from his own gracious hand, he will so adjust them, in number, season, weight, and measure, to the ability he communicates, that we both shall be able to bear, and also find a way made for us to escape. With such assurances, we may boldly say, 'The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man (or Satan) can do unto me.'

IV. There is, further, a consideration of profit and advantage, which makes the yoke of Christ easy. The believing soul is not mercenary. He loves his Master and his service; yet it is im-

* Deut. xxxiii. 25. † 1 Sam. xvii. 37.
‡ Dan. iii. 16. and vi. 22. Psalm xci. 13. 2 Tim. iv. 17.

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possible to serve God for nought. In the keeping of his commandments there is a reward, though not of debt, yet of grace:* a great and sure reward, respecting both the life that now is and that which is to come.

Those who sincerely take up the yoke of Christ, and cleave to him in love alone, have ample compensation in the present life for all that their profession can cost them. They enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, which is compared to a continual feast. St. Paul, though a champion for free grace, and determined to glory only in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,† expresses a high and just value for this privilege; and that it afforded comfort, yea joy, in a time of trouble. Superadded to this, they are often favoured with the peculiar consolations of the Holy Spirit, which, though slightly esteemed by those who know them not, satisfy the soul as with marrow and fatness, and can change the voice of mourning into songs of praise in an instant.‡ And though these are not their constant food, yet they have real and habitual communion with God, from day to day, in his ordinances and providences. They live in his presence; they converse with him, and he with them; their good things are doubly pleasing, because they receive them from his hand; and this thought likewise sweetens every bitter cup of affliction which he prepares for their good. The mutual intercourse and communion his people have with each other is likewise a considerable branch of their present reward. How pleasing is it when, speaking to each other in his name, they take sweet counsel together, they are confirmed in his way, by finding how their experiences answer as face to face in a glass; and he causes their hearts to burn within them while they are freely declaring what he has done for their souls. Lastly, they are happy in a comfortable expectation of a better world; and when the appointed time comes, death will put an end to all their trouble; and then shall they fully know and possess the future reward which the Lord has prepared and reserved for them that love him.

This is briefly summed up by the apostle: They shall be absent from the body,§ and all its inseparable evils; sin and sorrow, want, pain, and every distress that belongs to this mortal state shall affect them no more, and they shall be present with the Lord, whom they love. Then they shall see his face without a cloud, and share his joy without abatement or interruption; and all this shall be for ever. When they are made pillars of the New Jerusalem,‖ they shall come out no more. The prospect of this makes them rejoice under all their tribulations: for they know

* Ps. xix. 11. † 2 Cor. i. 12. ‡ Ps. lxiii. 3. § 2 Cor. v. 8. ‖ Rev. iii. 12. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

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whereto they lead, and how they will end. 'These light and momentary afflictions are working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'*

From these things I hope it will appear that the yoke of Christ is easy. His people serve him because they love him; they love his ways; he is their strength; he comforts them now, and will be their portion for ever.

But perhaps some, whom I would willingly comfort, will rather be discouraged by this representation, and say, Alas! if it is thus, I am yet to seek: my love is so faint, my strength so feeble, my consolations so small, my obedience so imperfect, that I am afraid I have not known the easy yoke of Christ. There are therefore some other things to be taken into the account, and which are no just exception to the character our Lord here gives of his yoke.

1. The entrance, or first application of the mind to the yoke or profession of the Gospel, is seldom pleasant. Though the work of grace leads to love, it usually begins in fear. On this point we have already spoken at large. It is no pleasing state to be weary and heavy laden, to see ourselves obnoxious to a curse, and unable to escape; yet by apprehensions of this kind the soul is prepared to embrace the yoke of Christ; and none but those who have experienced the misery of a fallen state will be truly desirous of the Gospel rest.

2. The progress is gradual. The first dawnings of grace in the heart are faint, and hardly perceptible; hence the whole process is compared to things that are very inconsiderable in their first principles. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which is hid and lost in the earth for a season; it is like leaven, which when cast into meal may be concealed and unnoticed for a while, but by degrees diffuses its influence through the whole mass:† It is like the corn which springs up and comes forward night and day, a man knows not how.‡ The growth in the Christian life being thus slow and indistinct, many who aim to ascertain their interest rather by the degree than the reality of grace, are often dejected to find their attainments proceed no faster. It is, indeed, a humbling consideration, but ought not to rob us of the comfort arising from a believing view of what Jesus has completely wrought out for us, and of what he has promised he will infallibly perform in us, in his own good time. A deliverance from this poring into ourselves for the grounds of our hope, is a part, a considerable part, of the rest to which he invites us.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. † Matt. xiii. 31—33. ‡ Mark iv. 27.

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3. The difficulties attendant on that course of faith and obedience which is included in taking his yoke upon us, are many and great. While we sojourn in a wilderness state, and in a sinful nature, there will be fightings without, and fears within. It is the appointed and necessary rule of our profession, that 'through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.'* All who are against him will be against us for his sake; and the evil heart of unbelief will show itself in a variety of forms, as it is acted upon by various impressions, from the things of sense and the powers of darkness. But these troubles do not arise from the spiritual yoke of Christ, but from our present situation and circumstances, and shall therefore shortly cease for ever. His ways are ways of pleasantness; though we are sure to meet with perplexity and uneasiness, so far and so often as we wander from them into our own crooked paths. But,

4. The end is sure. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved;'† and all who are in his way have his promise and power engaged in their behalf, that they shall certainly endure, that he will so lead, guide, support, and strengthen them, that neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate them from his love.‡ Your complaints and fears, therefore, are no proof that you are not right. Go on in his name. Trust in him in whom you have believed, and be nothing terrified by your adversaries. The longer you wear the yoke, the easier you will find it.

Let each one examine himself by what has been offered. If you have not a principle of true love to Christ, and a prevailing desire to live in all holy obedience to his will, you are no Christian; and though you may begin warmly, you will not be able to hold out, but your profession will wither away for want of root and moisture. Nor is it difficult to know whether you love him or no; if you do, you have seen your need of him, and abhor yourself in dust and ashes.

From hence, likewise, you may discern the difference between the religion of the Gospel and the formal worship that many are contented with, in which the heart has no place. Remember that 'God is a spirit,'§ and unless you love him, you cannot possibly please him. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. His commandments likewise are spiritual; they extend beyond the surface of the outward conduct, and take cognizance even of the retired thoughts and intents of the heart. Many sins may be avoided, and many duties performed, from motives and principles which not being derived

* Acts xiv. 22. † Matt. x. 22. ‡ Rom. viii. 38. § John iv. 24.

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from his word, or conformable to it, are therefore sinful in themselves, and make every thing proceeding from them defective and displeasing in his sight. If you are attempting to serve him by your own natural strength and understanding, be assured that you have not yet taken up the yoke of Christ; if you had, you would find it answerable to the character he has given of it, for his word is truth. But your constrained obedience, you know in yourselves, far from being easy and light, is a heavy burden which you would be glad to cast off if you durst. You serve the Lord as a slave serves a hard master, not with a willing mind, but of necessity, and from a dread of punishment. But in vain do you draw near to him with your lips while your heart is far from him. Therefore spend no longer your labour for that which is not bread, but come to Jesus that you may find rest to your souls. He is able to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, to put a new spirit in you that shall delight in his yoke, to give you strength and ability for every part of your duty, and to make you a willing people in the day of his power.

Believers, rejoice in your security. The Lord has given you a never-dying principle of love, and provided for you a never-failing supply of grace. These will bear you up through all your journey, and at last bring you safely home to the mansions provided for you in your Father's house. Then shall you praise him, world without end.

SERMON XIV.

BELIEVERS CAUTIONED AGAINST MISCONDUCT IN THEIR PROFESSION.

ROM. xiv. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

THE immediate occasion of this caution you may learn from the context. It has pleased God, from the beginning, to permit his people, who all agree in the great and essential truths of the Gospel, to differ in some things of less importance. This difference of judgment gives room for the mutual exercise of patience, forbearance, tenderness, and charity; but at the same time too often affords opportunity for the remaining corruptions of the heart to discover and exert themselves. The Jewish converts

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were for some time attached to the observance of that distinction in meats and drinks which had been enjoined by the law of Moses; the Gentiles, on the contrary, claimed a right to be free from this yoke as a part of the liberty which they had received from Christ. The apostle does not in this place blame either party with respect to their own judgment and practice; but he reproves them for censuring and despising each other; and he especially reproves those who understood their liberty in the Gospel, for not being prudent in the use of it, but rather forward to provoke and offend their weaker brethren. He confirms their liberty, but admonishes them not to abuse it, either by urging others to act against their consciences, or by treating them with contempt, because they had not entirely laid aside those scruples and prejudices to which they had been long accustomed. 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.' Be thankful for your liberty, but do not bring it into discredit and reproach by acting in an unbecoming spirit towards others.

The instruction in my text, understood in this sense, has always been applicable and seasonable in the Christian church, and perhaps never more so than in our land, and in our times. While believers in Jesus, who are led by the same Spirit into the same fundamental truths, and stand in the most endeared relation to each other through their common Head, place such undue stress upon lesser incidental differences, and are professed partisans for the little interests of systems, denominations, and leaders, *love*, the grand characteristic of their profession, is hardly discernible; they censure and grieve each other, retard the success of the cause which they would all be thought to have most at heart, and open the mouths of the adversaries to revile that which they understand not. The prevalence of this wrong disposition calls for the admonition in my text. Be thankful for your privileges; you not only claim the rights of private judgment and liberty of conscience, as men and as Christians, but as Britons you possess them. 'Let not then your good be evil spoken of:' allow to others that freedom which you expect yourselves; and if you do not suppose yourselves infallible, suppose it possible that some may be as near to the Lord as yourselves, who cannot agree with you in every sentiment you have adopted.

But this direction may be taken in a much more general sense. It behooves all who honour the Lord Jesus Christ to be careful in every part of their conduct, that they do not give occasion for their good to be evil spoken of. To make the subject as suitable as I can to the different states and characters of all present, I shall

1. Inquire what is the believer's good.

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2. Explain and apply the advice here given, 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.'

I. All mankind have something near at heart, on which their dependence is placed, and wherein they find their chief pleasure. This (whatever it is) is their good; and, according to the object in which they delight, is their proper character. By nature the world and worldly things are the highest good we seek after; and these, in one view or other, as tempers and situations vary, are pursued with unwearied earnestness. Riches, honours, sinful pleasures, are the poor things in view, when the unrenewed heart cries out in its eager pursuits, 'Who will show us any good?'* If your strongest desires tend this way, your good will not be evil spoken of by many. Men will praise you when you do well for yourself; you are not, therefore, concerned in the admonition in my text. Only take notice what the word of God declares of your good, and of you for accounting it so. Your good is vanity, your fruit is vexation of spirit, and you who set your hearts on such a good as the objects of sense can furnish, are adjudged 'enemies to God.'† You yourselves will speak evil of this good when you come to die, if you die in your sins. Then you will see a propriety in Esau's words to your own case, 'Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?'‡

As the world is the good of the unconverted, so a covenant God in Christ is the good and portion of all who are called by his grace. They are ever looking to the obedience and blood of Jesus, applied by the Spirit of grace, as the sole foundation of their hope and comfort. God is their good in the highest sense, and every thing else is good so far as it leads to him, and assists them in maintaining communion with him. In this view we may mention several particulars, each of which they account their good, because the means of enjoying and glorifying their God.

1. The Gospel, that gracious revelation by which they have been taught to know themselves, and to know Jesus, is their good. All the doctrines, precepts, and promises, contained in the Scripture, are a very precious treasure, in which they rejoice more than those who find great spoil. Each of them can say, in the language of the Psalmist, 'The law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day long.'§ By this word they are enlightened, quickened, warned, comforted, and

* Psal. iv. 6. † James iv. 4. ‡ Gen. xxv. 32. § Psal. cxix. 72, 97, 103.

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supported; therefore it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, and more than their necessary food.*

2. The ordinances make a part of their good. A famine of the word of the Lord would distress them greatly; and if they may but have frequent opportunities of this kind, and meet with his gracious presence in them, they can be content to be without many things which the men of this world highly value. When beset with many straits, and surrounded with troubles, they can find refreshment in the Lord's assurance by the prophet, 'And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more; but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.'† If this promise is fulfilled to them, they will not greatly complain of the bread of adversity, although that is joined with it. But, on the contrary, they find it a hard trial to be deprived of lively ordinances and faithful ministers, however advantageous and pleasing their situation may be in temporal things, because these are not their good.

3. They account their profession a part of their good. They esteem it a high privilege to bear the name of Christ, though it exposes them to the reproach of the world. They account it a great and important trust to have the honour of the Gospel committed to them, and in some measure dependant on their conduct. When they are in their right minds, they would rather die than be guilty of any thing that might bring it into discredit. Wilfully they cannot, they dare not do it; but through ignorance and infirmity they are prone to mistake, and therefore need, and are desirous to observe, the caution in my text.

4. Their experiences are their good, their choice pearls; I mean the inward dealings of the Lord with their souls; the proofs they have had of his power and wisdom in bringing them thus far safely on their way to his kingdom, the discoveries he has given them of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, the manifestations of his grace, love, and nearness to them, notwithstanding all their unworthiness and unfaithfulness. Some of these experiences have cost them dear, have cost them many a pang, trouble, and conflict; yet they would not be without them to avoid all that they have suffered; and they are content to suffer on, if by any means they may increase this precious stock. They delight to recollect how low they were brought, how wonderfully delivered, what answers they have been favoured with to their poor prayers; and from hence to collect the all-sufficiency and goodness of him to whom they have fled for refuge, and to derive ar-

* Job xxiii. 12. † Isa. xxx. 20.

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guments wherewith to combat their unbelieving fears in time to come. Thus far their experiences are their good; not as the foundation of their hope, or the source of their comfort, for these their whole reliance is on the obedience and blood of Jesus the Saviour; but as evidences that they have neither 'followed cunningly-devised fables, nor received the grace of God in vain.'*

Thus much in general, that you may all have something whereby to try your spirits, and to know whether you have embraced the good of the Lord's chosen people.† If your good does not lie in such things as I have mentioned, you have no durable riches, nothing but what you must soon leave behind you. Can you be content to be stripped of all, and to enter poor, naked, and friendless, into an eternal world? O that you would take our Lord's advice. He might command, for he has all authority; but he says, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.'‡

But some there are whose hearts can go along with me in what I have said. The great God himself is your good. His word and ordinances, your profession of his name, and your experience of his goodness, are what you rejoice in. To you, then, I address the rest of my discourse. 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.'

I am,

II. To explain and apply this advice. The words plainly imply two things.

1. That there are many ready enough to speak evil of your good; many who despise the Gospel, and you for professing it; they watch for your halting, and will be glad of the smallest occasion to expose you. The world, that loves its own, will make allowances in other cases. Indiscretions, and even vices, will be charged to the account of human infirmity, and the amiable name of candour shall be employed to conceal or palliate such things as can by no means be justified. But if you are a professed believer in Jesus you must not expect this candour will be extended to you; rather all your words and actions will be sifted, your mistakes exaggerated; and if any part of your conduct will bear a double construction, it will generally be viewed in the most unfavourable light. Nay, even when there is no just occasion afforded, falsehoods and calumnies have been and will be industri-

*2. Pet. i. 16. 2 Cor. vi. 1. † Ps. cvi. 4, 5. ‡ Rev. iii. 18.

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ously propagated against the servants of Christ.* That it must be so, we are often warned by Scripture, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience.

2. That though it is impossible wholly to stop the mouths of evil-minded men, yet they would not be able to talk so fast if the imprudence of believers did not too often afford them advantage. That such occasions should sometimes be given by those whose hearts and aims are in the main sincere, will not be thought strange to any person who is acquainted with the true state of human nature. Through inadvertence, want of experience, errors of judgment, sudden and unexpected temptations, and other evils inseparable from our present situation, persons, whose chief desire is to adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things, may, and do, in some instances, cause their good to be evil spoken of. It is, however, our bounden duty, as we regard the honour of God and his truth, to endeavour as much as possible, to 'cut off occasion from them'† that seek occasion in this respect.

In order to this, let us inquire what are the most common objections which are made against the Gospel-preaching and profession, not only by malicious enemies, but sometimes by persons who discover no very bad intention, but are partly imposed upon by the misrepresentations of others, and partly stumbled by the faults of professors?

1st. It is objected that our doctrine lays no sufficient stress upon good works. We dare not, indeed, recommend them out of their proper place, or propose them as the ground of our acceptance with God. But I hope none who attend here will dare to say that they are not frequently reminded, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'‡ However, the world will judge more by what they *see* in *you*, than by what they *hear* from *me*. Be upon your guard, therefore, lest by any instances of a trifling, foolish, unkind, or unjust conduct, you let your good be evil spoken of. It will not be a sufficient apology to say that your principles do not allow of these things, if those who know you can charge them upon your practice.

2dly. It is further objected that the evangelical system is a scheme chiefly made up of notions and subtle distinctions, and opens a door to a thousand disputes. This is one unhappy consequence of our many divisions and subdivisions, and the heat with which they are contended for by their respective partisans. Let this engage you to avoid a disputing, contentious spirit. 'Be

* Matt. v. 11. 2 Cor. xi. 12. 1 Pet. ii. 12.
‡ Heb. xii. 14.

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swift to hear, slow to speak;'* and when a reason is asked 'of the hope that is in you,'† give your answers with meekness and fear, lest you cause your good to be evil spoken of.

3dly. It is likewise a very common objection, that a usual effect of this doctrine is to make people idle and careless with regard to the necessary concerns and business of life. Indeed I should not be unwilling to plead with candid and fair reasoners, in behalf of young converts on this point. At first setting out, the change is so great, their views of eternal things so strong and affecting, that, considering human infirmity, it can hardly be otherwise but that the attention will be almost entirely taken up with them for a season. While a sense of unpardoned sin is fixed upon the conscience, and a person, now duly aware of the uncertainty of life, is in suspense about the greatest of all concerns, and knows not how or whither he shall be able to flee from the wrath to come, it is no wonder if this solicitude should, in a great measure, swallow up his thoughts, and leave him but little either leisure or ability to attend to other concerns, which, however proper in their respective places, are confessedly, in comparison of this, of little or no importance. In like manner, the removal of this burden is usually accompanied with such a lively sense of the wisdom, love, power, and grace of God, revealed in Christ Jesus by the Gospel, as may for a little while almost overpower and extinguish the apprehension of inferior things. But if this indifference about common duties continues very long, or is indulged to an extreme, it gives great and just offence. It causes the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, and we hardly know what to say, but this, That the fault is not owing to the Gospel, but to the neglect of what the Gospel teaches and enjoins. This is no new inconvenience; the apostles observed and reproved it in their day. There were such mistaken persons among the Thessalonians, who supposed or pretended that the Gospel exempted them from labour. Of these he says, 'Now them that are such we exhort and command, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread;' and further directs, 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat.'‡ The Sabbath is the Lord's; and the same command which forbids us to do any work then, requires us to labour on the other six days. 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.' Be faithful to your trust, diligent in your business, do every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Give no one just cause to say, that since you have become religious you care not (as the phrase is) which end goes foremost; for this

* James i. 19. † 1 Pet. iii. 15. ‡ 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

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would be to put a stumbling-block in their way, and to increase their prejudices against the truth.

4thly. Once more: The Gospel doctrine is charged with weakening the bands of natural and social relation; that it makes children and servants heady, high-minded, and disobedient, so that they presently think themselves wiser than all about them, and are obstinately bent to have their own wills. This objection will indeed cleave to the Gospel so long as the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God are opposite to each other. For cases will inevitably arise where we must either displease God or man, and then we ought not to hesitate a moment. But professors should take care to be assured that there is such a necessity before they act against lawful authority: and especially when the point in dispute lies between children and parents. For though we ought to disobey and forsake father and mother when God's commands require it; yet next, under God, parents are above all to be honoured, consulted, and obeyed: and the excepted cases are not near so numerous as persons in the warmth of their first zeal are apt to suppose. The enemy suits his temptations to our occasions; and it is no uncommon thing to be drawn to act violently in our own spirits, while we imagine we are striving in the cause of God and truth.

In short, we are directed to examine ourselves, and others are allowed to examine us by our fruits. The people of the world are not proper judges of spiritual experiences, but they can judge tolerably right of tempers and actions. Some will watch you out of ill-will, and some will observe you for information. If they hear you have begun to make a religious profession, they will take notice to see if you are the better for it. They will observe you not only in the church, but in the shop and in the house; and if they perceive you are all of a piece, steady, quiet, humble, diligent, who knows but this may be a means in the hand of God to win upon them, and to give them a more favourable regard to the means which have wrought so effectually on you? But, on the contrary, if you are imprudent, rash, and careless, if you either conform to the world, or neglect your acknowledged duty in it, you will cause your good to be evil spoken of, bring difficulties upon yourselves, and put it out of your own power to be useful to others. Pray, therefore, for wisdom and grace, to make your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. This is the great design and proper effect of the Gospel, when rightly understood. For as it is the grace of God alone which bringeth salvation; so this grace not only enlightens the understanding, but purifies the heart, regulates the conduct, works by love, and over-

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comes the world. It effectually teaches and enforces (what the best schemes of morality and philosophy have always failed in) the denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts;* and by the motives it displays, and the strength it communicates, enables the true Christian to adorn his character in every relation, and to fill up the whole circle of duty as it respects himself, his neighbour, and the God with whom he has to do. It teaches to live soberly, righteously, and godly; to avoid whatsoever is contrary to the purity of the Gospel; to practise moderation in the use even of lawful things; and to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. It teaches the rich to be humble and bountiful, the poor to be thankful and resigned. It teaches superiors to be kind, inferiors to be faithful. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, magistrates and people, are all instructed by this grace to a conduct answerable to their high calling, and to the common relation they stand in to him who has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood. For the morality of the Gospel has a nobler spring, and a more extensive scope, than the ties of social life. Their sobriety and righteousness are not substituted in the place of vital godliness, but are the fruits derived from it. The grace of God teaches them to live godly, to delight in him, to obey him, to do every thing for his sake, as under his eye, and to be continually governed by a sense of his unspeakable love manifested in his Son, and 'an expectation of the blessed hope set before us, the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that by his blood and Spirit he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Labour to show that you are not only called by his name, but have sat at his feet and drank of his spirit; and if, after all, unreasonable and wicked men will speak evil of you and your good, be not moved at it, but pity and pray for them. When he shall return to vindicate your cause, and wipe away your reproach, then 'every cloud shall be removed, and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'†

* Titus ii. 11—15. † Matt. xiii. 43.

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SERMON XV.

THE EXTENT AND SANCTION OF THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. XX. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

THE foundation of true religion is laid in a right knowledge of God and ourselves. How deficient we are in each of these, how far fallen from original righteousness, is strongly implied in this prohibition; which would be wholly unnecessary, if we were not wholly sunk in stupidity and wickedness. That such worms as we should be liable to trifle with the Divine Majesty, whose presence fills the heaven and the earth, before whom the angels hide their faces; that such frail dependent creatures have need to be cautioned, that we do not profane the name of the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, is a striking proof of our depravity; and that we can dare to break through this caution, and slight the awful threatening with which it is closed, is a dreadful aggravation of our guilt.

These words, when first spoken to the Israelites, were delivered in flames and thunder. The mountain shook, the people trembled, and even Moses, who had been honoured with peculiar freedom of access to God, was constrained to cry, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.'* Such a scene, or rather infinitely more dreadful, shall hereafter take place, 'when the Lord himself shall again descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; when he shall be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance of all who know him not, and obey not his Gospel.'† 'Then shall sinners be convinced, not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him;'† and they shall know the full meaning of that terrible exception which I have read, 'that the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.'

* Heb. xii. 21. † 1 Thess. iv. 16. 2 Thess i. 8. ‡ Jude. 15.

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The terms of my text require little explanation. The name of God is in every one's mouth, upon one occasion or other, in places where his revealed will is known. In a more eminent and peculiar sense his name is discovered to his believing people in Christ Jesus the Lord; those who know the name* of God in Christ will put their trust in him; they dare not, they cannot blaspheme that holy name by which they are called. But I shall take it more extensively here; for though but few understand the name of God in an evangelical and saving sense, there is not a person in this assembly but knows and makes mention of his holy name, so far as to render them transgressors of this commandment. To take his name in vain, is to use it falsely or profanely, inconsiderately, without due reverence, or unprofitably, and without a suitable necessity. The sanction, 'the Lord will not hold him guiltless,' has indeed a meaning and emphasis beyond what is expressed. Similar forms of speaking are frequent in Scripture, as, 'the Lord will not spare that man;'† that is, he will punish him to the uttermost; for it is immediately added, 'all the curses of this book shall come upon him.' Again, 'he spared not the angels;' that is, he showed them no mercy, as the following words declare: 'he spared not the old world,' he visited them with utter destruction, and swept them all away with a flood. So, 'he will not hold him guiltless,' implies two things: 1st. That the Lord God has appointed a day to call sinners to an account for their words, as well as their actions. 2dly. That whatever shall become of others, those who have presumed to take his name in vain have their doom already determined. Whoever escapes, they shall be surely punished; whoever he acquits, he will certainly condemn them.

As the import of the expressions is not difficult, so likewise it will be far more easy than agreeable to point out some of the many ways in which this commandment is customarily and carelessly broken. The law in general, and each particular precept, is *spiritual*,‡ and perhaps this will be found of a more extensive signification than some of you are aware. The delightful theme of a minister of the Gospel is to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to open the treasures of divine mercy, and to show the grace, freeness, and security of the promises; to raise up them that fall, to strengthen those that stand; 'to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded; to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'§ But these subjects do not comprise *the whole* of our message;

* Psalm ix. 10. † Deut. xxix. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5. ‡ Rom. vii. 14.
§ 1 Thess. v. 14. Luke iv. 18.

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and, in general, we find that the full soul loathed the honeycomb ;* and multitudes, through ignorance of the spirituality and purity of God's holy law, and a partial judgment of their own hearts, can neither see the beauty nor the necessity of the Gospel-salvation. We are therefore constrained frequently to insist on far less pleasing subjects, to lift up our voices like a trumpet,† to demand a general attention while we attempt to show our hearers their transgressions and their sins, that we may thereby make the doctrine of the cross of Christ welcome and desirable. It is painful to the patient, and without doubt unpleasing to the humane artist, to probe a deep and dangerous wound ; but necessity commands, and without it a complete and lasting cure is not to be expected.

1. The first and most direct way in which the name of God is taken in vain, is by *perjury;* that is, when he is expressly appealed to in confirmation of what is false, or when engagements are made as in his name and presence, which are not *strictly and literally complied with.* I need not take up your time in proving that this is a *sin* of a deep *dye* in itself, and attended with peculiar aggravations under the light of the Gospel ; and I wish it was more difficult to to prove the frequency of it in our land ; but this, likewise, is as obvious as the light. I have sometimes met with a random assertion, that though we are wicked enough, we are not worse than others countries. In other things I am content to wave the parallel ; but with respect to the sin of perjury, I fear we are much worse than any nation now under the sun, perhaps worse than any that the sun ever saw. I am afraid there are *more* and *more daring* instances of this wickedness amongst us than in all the rest of Europe. By an unhappy kind of necessity it is interwoven, as it were, with the very constitution of the body politic, and diffuses itself, like a deadly contagion, amongst all orders and ranks of people. Oaths are so excessively multiplied, and so generally neglected, that it is equally difficult and rare for a person to engage, through a course of years, in any kind of employment, either civil or commercial, (O that it stopped even here !) without being ensnared. Some are so *expressed* that it is morally impossible to comply with them ; others so *circumstanced* that they are usually swallowed without the remotest design of regarding them, either in whole or in part. If here and there a few make conscience of their engagements, and are desirous to perform to the Lord their oaths,‡ or decline taking such as open a door either to honour or profit, so strong is the torrent the other way, that it is well if they escape the charge

* Prov. xxvii. 7. † Isa. lviii. 1. ‡ Matt. v. 33.

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of singularity and preciseness. Though wickedness of every kind too much abounds amongst us, *perjury* is perhaps peculiarly and eminently our *national sin;* and I tremble to think it is so; for it gives too just a ground to fear the approach of national judgments. Surely all who have any regard for the honour of God, any sense of the worth of souls, will pray earnestly that this iniquity may not be our ruin, but that the Lord would be pleased to inspire and succeed the most proper means for the removal, or at least the mitigation of this evil. This would be an event worthy to stand in the annals of the happy times and auspicious government under which we live.

2. And though the matter of an oath be strictly true, yet if it is not transacted with a serious acknowledgment and homage of that divine Being to whom appeal is made; such an oath, however lawful and necessary it may be in itself, is, with regard to all such thoughtless triflers, no better than taking the name of God in vain. It cannot but be grievous to every serious mind, to observe the little reverence and solemnity, or rather the total want of common decency, which too frequently prevails among us in this respect; so that sometimes it is not easy to say, whether those who *tender* the oath, or those who *take* it, seem *least in earnest.* Without doubt this indifference may be assigned as one cause of the increase and prevalence of perjury. If those who are authorized to require or receive those solemn appeals, were themselves impressed with a due reverence of the awful majesty of God, and were solicitous to inspire all who came before them with the same sentiments, and would remind them (those especially who appear very positive and unguarded) of the impiety and danger of swearing falsely, it is possible many mischiefs would be prevented. Some persons would probably tremble and start back from the first temptation to this wickedness; and others might be deterred from persisting in it, who, for want of such admonitions and examples; and because they never saw any solemnity observed, precipitately rush upon this enormous evil, and are at length given up to a dreadful habit of wilful and corrupt perjury.

3. If an oath, lawful and necessary in itself, may thus become criminal through inconsideration, what shall we say of the throng of profane swearers, who wound our ears, and pollute our language, by a horrid mixture of execrations and blasphemies, in their common conversation? 'Their throats are an open sepulchre; their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, the poison of asps is under their lips.'* This I have to say from the word

* Rom. iii. 13, 14.

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of God, that the Lord will not hold them guiltless. In vain their thoughtless plea, that they mean no harm; in vain their presumptuous comparison of themselves with others, as though these were trivial escapes that did not affect the peace of society. If these were small sins singly, their frequeney would swell to a vast amount: but is it, indeed, a small sin to rush against the thick bosses of God's buckler, and to despise so terrible a threatening as this? Surely, 'the plague shall never depart from the house of the swearer.' 'As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so it shall enter into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.'* A habit of swearing is a sure sign, not only of an unsanctified heart, but of a conscience hardened, and, as it were, seared with a hot iron, callous, and quite insensible.

4. Some persons who scruple expressly to mention the name of God, accustom themselves to swear by his creatures, by the heavens, by the light, or by their own souls, &c. But that this likewise is a direct violation of the law, and exposes to the same penalties, we are assured by him who best knew how to explain his own commands. Our Lord determines this point in his sermon on the mount, so as not to leave the possibility of a doubt. 'I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair thereof white or black.'† 'And whoso shall swear by the temple sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.'‡ 'But let your communications be Yea, yea, Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' This decision evidently condemns, not only what is usually deemed swearing, but the whole multitude of idle expletives, whether fashionable or vulgar, which have the force of affirmations in common discourse. Will any who live in a Christian country, and have the Bible at hand, think to plead ignorance of these things in the great day?

5. If I should stop here, some of you would applaud yourselves, and perhaps not be displeased with me for what I have hitherto said. Some who think themselves clear thus far, will join with me in saying, 'Because of swearing, the land mourns.'§ But are there no other ways of taking the name of God in vain? Yes; many do it as often as they pray: and it is easily proved against numbers who join in our established worship. Let each

* Psalm cix. 17, 18.
† Matt. v. 34—36.
‡ Matt. xxiii. 21, 22.
§ Jer. xxiii. 10.

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one consider with what dispositions and desires they have engaged in the service we have already gone through this day. Our mouths have all spoken the same things; but have they been the language of our hearts? In the confession we acknowledge that 'there is no health in us,' and speak as if we were true penitents. In the communion-service, we cry for mercy as miserable sinners; we pray that the 'thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of God's holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name; and for this we appeal to God, as 'to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.' More than a few of you, at certain seasons, publicly declare, that the remembrance of your sins is grievous, and the burthen of them is intolerable.' Now, what apprehensions can such of you have of God as can dare to use this solemn language, when your hearts mean no such thing?

Is not this to take his name in vain in the grossest manner? Is it not plain that you think him altogether such a one as yourselves;* nay, more easily imposed upon, and more safely to be trifled with, than a fallible mortal? Strange it is to think, that many can not only content themselves with this lip-service, but make it the meritorious ground of their hope, and conceit themselves religious because they come so often to church to mock the power that made them! But hardly can any wickedness be imagined more daring, and more dreadfully provoking to the Most High, than such a religion as this. To all such worshippers I may address those striking words of St. Peter to Ananias, 'thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'†

6. The whole lives of those who live in the allowed practice of known sin, under the profession of the Christian name, may be considered as one continual breach of this command. In all you say and do, you blaspheme that holy name by which you are called; and still more so, if you are declared friends and favourers of evangelical preaching. By your means, the ways of truth are evil spoken of.'‡ You give occasion to those offences of which it is said, 'Wo to that man by whom the offence cometh.' You injure the cause of Christ, stumble the weak in the faith, grieve the hearts of all who love the Lord, and make his enemies rejoice. 'Better it would have been for you never to have known the ways of righteousness,'§ than thus to abuse your knowledge. You are now mingled with his faithful servants, as the chaff is blended with the wheat upon the floor.‖ But, 'behold, the judge standeth at the door.' His fan is in his hand, he

* Psalm l. 21. † Acts. v. 4. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 2. Matt. xviii. 7.
§ 2 Pet. ii. 21. ‖ Matt. iii. 12. James v. 9.

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will thoroughly purge his floor; and when he gathers the wheat into his garner, you will be consumed, like stubble before the flame of his indignation. What distress and remorse will seize your hearts, when you shall see them with whom you have often joined in the same ordinances, that have lived with you under the same roof, dined at the same table, perhaps slept in the same bed, when you shall see them received into the kingdom, and you yourselves excluded, and thrust into that utter darkness,* where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever?

From this subject we may observe, by way of inference and application,

1. The truth and propriety of that Scripture, 'We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'† What person in this assembly can plead guiltless to every part of this charge? Must we not all stand silent and self-condemned? and if you are a transgressor, what can you do, either to repair the dishonour you have offered to the Divine Majesty, or to prevent the contagious effects of your own evil example? Nothing can be more false than a too frequent form of speech amongst us. When a man of some amiable qualifications in social life tramples without fear upon the laws of God, how often is it said, by way of extenuation, he is no one's enemy but his own! when, indeed, his practice declares him to be an enemy of God, an enemy to his holiness and government; and he is a most mischievous enemy to all who live under his influence, and within the circle of his acqaintance, by tempting and encouraging them to sin, to the hazard of their souls. Things standing thus with all men by nature, with what language can we answer the law's demands? Must we not adopt the pathetic confession of the prophet? 'For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim. The crown is fallen from our heads: wo unto us that we have sinned!'‡

2. The necessity and value of the Gospel; otherwise how can you escape the penalty, and stand acquitted before the supreme Judge? If you refuse this, 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin.'§ But if you humble yourself, and apply to Jesus, there is yet hope. He died for sinners, the chief of sinners, and the greatest of sins. For his sake, all manner of sin and blasphemy is pardonable: 'he is able to save to the uttermost.' But he must do the whole, and have all the glory. Believe in his name.

* Luke xiii. 28. † Rom. iii. 19. ‡ Lam. v. 16, 17. § Heb. x. 26.

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This is the first step; without grace derived from him, you can do nothing. Remember his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; and that he is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, on the behalf of those who are ready to perish. Let this be your plea and encouragement to draw near to a throne of grace. Pray for his Spirit to reveal his righteousness, power, and love to your soul; and as your knowledge of him increases, your repentance will be more spiritual, evangelical, and effectual. Entreat him to enable you to forsake your former evils, to set a guard upon the door of your lips, and to inspire you with an awful veneration of that holy name which you have hitherto profaned. He can teach your polluted lips to show forth his praise.

And let the redeemed of the Lord, whom he has delivered from the guilt and power of this iniquity, adore the grace and mercy that has saved them. Look back upon your past lives, and rejoice with trembling. How often have you defied his vengeance and power, and perhaps madly uttered horrid imprecations against yourselves! Why have others been cut off in these sins, and you spared? Yes; 'such were some of you: but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'* And now your tongues, which once uttered blasphemies almost with every breath, or, under a form of godliness pronounced a language foreign to your hearts, delight in extolling the name of Jesus and celebrating the wonders of redeeming love. Now, when you speak of the great God your hearts are awed with an apprehension of his majesty, yet comforted with the thought, that this God is your God, your almighty friend, your everlasting portion. Now you feel the influence of the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, 'Abba, Father.' Little did you think, in the days of your ignorance, that the God whom you was presumptuously offending, had, in the counsels of his everlasting love, chosen you to salvation by Jesus Christ.† But he was found of you when you sought him not. He passed by you when you was lying in your blood, and bid you live. This was the secret reason why you could not destroy yourselves. And at length his time of love came, the hour which he had appointed to open your eyes to show you mercy, to deliver you from the power of darkness, and to translate you into the kingdom of his dear Son. Do not your hearts glow with a sense of your obligations to him who hath loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood? Will you not live to him who has saved you from so great a death? Yea, doubtless, you will count all things

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Ephes. i. 4. Isa. lxv. 1. Ezek. xvi. 6—8. Col. i. 13.

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but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. You will use all your influence to diffuse the savour of his precious name. You will take shame to yourselves, and ascribe glory to him. You will be zealous for his cause, and have a tender compassion for poor sinners, who know not what they do, remembering, from your past experience, the misery and gall of an unconverted state. Let as many of us as have received mercy be thus minded; let it be our great study to show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, till the welcome hour shall arrive, when he will say to all who fear and love him, and long for his appearance, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'*

SERMON XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMPARED TO A RACE.

1 Cor. ix. 24.

—So run that ye may obtain.

The Scripture teaches us to derive profitable lessons from common occurrences: and since we cannot avoid seeing and hearing the vanities of those who know not God, unless we should go wholly out of the world, we may learn some instruction from them at a distance. The country of Greece, and especially the neighbourhood of Corinth, was famous for trials of skill in a variety of exercises, such as racing, wrestling, fighting, and the like. And because the children of the world are very wise in their generation, and spare no pains to accomplish the point they have in view, the apostle would stir up believers to diligence from their example; and therefore, in several places, compares the Christian life to one or other of the contests which were managed in the public games, and here particularly to a race. In those ancient races much solemnity was observed. The ground or course was exactly marked out; those who were to run went through a strict regimen and exercise beforehand; a vast concourse of people were assembled as spectators; authorised judges

* Matt. xxv. 34.

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were appointed to award the prize, which was a crown of laurel or oak leaves, to the winner: and before they began, a herald publicly proclaimed the rules to be observed by the competitors; which, unless strictly complied with, all their pains and endeavours issued only in disappointment and shame. To each of these particulars the apostle alludes in different parts of his writings.

Let us then briefly consider wherein the allusion holds and takes notice of some things in which there is a remarkable difference.

I. That the Christian life is compared to a race, may intimate to us,

1. That it is a laborious and strenuous service, and incompatible with an indolent and careless frame of spirit. Not that we can do any thing of ourselves: in this sense, 'it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth.'* But when a believer is animated by a view of Jesus, and the prize of the high calling, to run the race set before him, he finds that it demands his utmost strength, courage, and patience. A spectator may divert himself with the prospect, or the company; he may make observations upon what passes around him, and ride as softly as he pleases: but then he has no pretensions to the prize. But those who are actually candidates for it, may be easily distinguished without being pointed out; they have no leisure for amusement; their eyes are fixed, and their thoughts wholly engaged, upon what they have in hand; and they exert all their powers, and strain every nerve, to reach the goal. How inconsistent is the conduct of many professors? They enter the lists, they inform themselves of the rules, they even presume to expect the prize, though they while away their whole lives without once attempting to run in good earnest. Not so those who are taught and called of God: a sense of the worth of their souls, of the love of Christ, of the glory that shall be revealed, of their own weakness, and of the many obstacles that withstand their progress, stirs them up to watchfulness, diligence, and prayer, and excites a holy jealousy 'lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of them should come short of it.'†

2. That we should still press forward, and not rest in what we have received. If a man sets out in a race with the greatest speed, and seems to outstrip all his antagonists; yet if he does not persevere to the end, he will be sure to lose. The apostle alludes to a race in another place, where he says, 'forgetting the

* Rom. ix. 16. † Heb. iv. 1.

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things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before,* I stretch forward.' The Greek word beautifully expresses the earnestness and energy of those who run, and are determined to be first: they make no account of the ground already passed over, but exert themselves to the utmost, labour with their hands and feet, and strain every joint to the utmost, as though the whole success depended upon each single step. We see too many instances of persons who begin warmly, and seem to run well for a season; but they are hindered in their progress, slacken their pace first, and then stop short. Take notice of the exhortation in my text, 'So run that you may obtain;' for it will be a dreadful disappointment if you should be set aside disapproved, when others receive the prize.

II. The heralds or criers in the Christian race are the ministers of the Gospel; and their proper name of office is expressed by the same word. They have it in charge to invite all to run, and to declare the prescribed rules: and these must be carefully attended to; for *if*, or, as it might be rendered, *although a man strive*,† although he wrestle, and fight, and run, weary himself, and excel others; yet, after all, he loses the prize, *he is not crowned, unless he strive lawfully*, unless he strictly conforms to the prescribed regulations, he will be judged unqualified, though in other respects skilful and diligent; unless he runs in the limits marked out, fights with the usual weapons, and observes, in all points, the discipline of the place. We are bound in duty, at the same time that we proclaim the race, and point out the prize to your view, to tell you, that without faith and holiness‡ there can be no acceptance. And we cannot but be grieved to see how little these cautions are regarded by multitudes. Some are labouring, as it were, in the fire, to establish a righteousness by their own works, and refuse to believe in Christ for salvation. Others, who profess indeed to believe in him, call themselves his people, and affect to speak highly of his Gospel, yet eventually deny him by their works and conversation. But unless you can alter the sure determinations of the word of God, there must be an alteration in yourselves, or else when you think you have attained, and shall confidently demand the prize, you will hear him say, 'I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.'§

There is a circumstance in this resemblance which I would not pass over, because it is peculiar to the Christian race. The ministers or heralds are not only to invite others, but are likewise to

* Phil. iii. 13, 14.
† 2 Tim. ii. 5.
‡ Mark xvi. 16. Heb. xii. 14.
§ Luke xiii. 27.

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run themselves. To this the apostle alludes, when he says, 'Lest, when I have preached to others, I should be myself a cast-away;'* or be disapproved of the judge for breaking those regulations himself which he had been authorised to propound to all. We have need to preach to ourselves no less than to you, and to entreat your prayers for us, that we may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God. And the caution may be proportionally extended to every one that is intrusted with any measure of gifts for the edification of the people of God. Keep close to his word; pray for his Spirit; be diligent and temperate in all things; and maintain a watchful jealousy over your own hearts: these are the means by which the Lord keeps his people from falling. But trust not to any outward talent, calling or usefulness; for it is possible for a man to be instrumental to the good of others in families and societies, and yet to come short of the kingdom himself at last.

III. I have observed that a great concourse of spectators attended at the ancient games. The Christian, in his race and warfare, has likewise innumerable eyes upon him, a great cloud of witnesses. We are exhibited a spectacle to the world, to the whole universe, both to angels and to men.† Though he may be placed in an obscure situation, yet his neighbours at least will observe him, to see how his profession and practice agree. Invisible beings attend him in every step; the good angels‡ rejoice over the returning sinner; and it is probable, by God's appointment, support and refresh him in ways which are beyond our apprehension. The powers of darkness watch him with subtilty and envy, and go to the utmost bounds of their commission, in their endeavours, either to divert him from his course, or to make it uncomfortable to him. How should this thought both animate and humble every sincere soul? Be not discouraged, because to appearance you are almost left to serve God alone. If the vail of flesh and blood could be drawn aside, you would see you are not alone; all the host of heaven are on your side; the glorious company that are before the throne of God, day without night, rejoicing, are engaged in your cause, and drink of the same fountain from which you are supplied. The spirits of just men made perfect, who are now all eye, all ear, all love, were once as you are, partakers of the same infirmities, sorrows, and cares; and you ere long shall be as they are, clothed with light, and freed from every burden. And Jesus, the Lord of angels, the King of saints, beholds your toil and conflict with complacence, and says, 'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'§

* 1 Cor. ix. 27. † 1 Cor. iv. 9. ‡ Luke xv. 10. § Rev. iii. 11.

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He is always near to succour, strengthen, and to save. Rejoice, therefore, that you run not as unnoticed, but rejoice with trembling. Be ashamed to think how disproportionate your efforts are to the company that behold you, and to the prize that awaits you. Remember, likewise, other eyes are upon you; Satan envies your privileges, and scorns your profession: he is every minute waiting permission to sift you as wheat:* he is incessantly spreading snares for your feet, and preparing his arrows against you; therefore be not high-minded, but fear, and give all diligence so to run that you may obtain.

IV. The judge who presides at the end of the race is Jesus, the *judge of all.* He holds forth the prize full in view to the eye of faith, and shall shortly crown the conqueror with his own hand. How sweetly does the apostle spiritualise upon this circumstance! 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge,' (who does not decide by appearances, nor can be influenced by partiality, as is too frequent amongst men) 'shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing.'† Be of good cheer, believer; your case may be misrepresented, or misunderstood by men; but the Lord, the righteous and unerring Judge, will vindicate, approve, and reward in the great day when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

Thus much concerning the resemblance of the Christian life to a race, to which the apostle alludes. I shall briefly take notice of some particulars in which the resemblance fails; and a very interesting and important difference may be observed.

1. In the reward. *The bodily exercise*‡ (employed in the games, for to these the apostle refers) *profited little:* a crown of oak or laurel, or some such bauble, was their highest aim, and this, the most of the competitors came short of; for though all ran, *but one received the prize.* Of little more value, and equal uncertainty, is the prize that has engaged the time and thoughts of many. *But godliness* (the whole course and conflict in which the believer is engaged) *is profitable for all things,* or in every view, having promises to support the life that now is, and to crown that which is to come. 'He that overcometh, saith the Lord, shall inherit all things. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; yea, I will

* Luke xxii. 31. † 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

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grant him to sit down with me in my throne.'* The Lord will give grace here, and will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly; and hereafter he will crown grace with glory, and place his servants out of the reach of every trouble and enemy, in the kingdom which his love has prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. 'Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.'†

2. In races, though many run, one only can receive the prize. But thanks be to God, it is not so in the Christian race. All who run as the Lord has appointed, shall be sure to win. No opposition can prevail against them, nor will the number of the candidates be any diminution to the happiness of each individual. The inheritance of the saints in light, like the light of the sun, is not diminished by being shared amongst many; each one possesses the whole in the same perfection as he could do if there was none to enjoy it but himself.

3. In the races the apostle alludes to, none were compelled to run. The proclamation was general; but those who did not choose to engage, suffered no disadvantage. But it is not so in the race to which you are invited by the Gospel. The Lord is greatly offended with those who slight the message, and refuse to enter the lists. If you only give his ministers a hearing, and return to your‡ farms and merchandise, forget the worth of your precious souls, and suffer your thoughts to be engrossed with the cares and pleasures of this life, to the neglect of this one thing needful, the Lord will account it a contempt offered to himself, and will ere long call you before his tribunal to answer for it.

4. Those who run and did not win the prize, only lost their labour, or, at the worst, were exposed to shame; but they were liable to no positive punishment. But you who are professors of the Gospel, if you come short at last, will be lost for ever. 'So run that you may obtain.' Be not content with having set out; the promise is made to perseverance. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved;'§ but if any draw back, or stop short, the Lord will have no pleasure in them. They will not only lose the prize, but will receive a heavy and aggravated doom. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. If you were forced to run for your lives, you would be very thoughtful about the event.

* Rev. ii. 7. iii. 12—21. xxii. 7. Psalm lxxxiv. 11. † 2 Cor. vii. 1.
‡ Matt. xxii. 5. § Matt. x. 22. Heb. x. 38.

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But if you are not found amongst those who come in for the prize of eternal life, you will be cast into outer darkness, and sink under the curse of God for ever.

Fain, therefore, would I persuade you to address yourselves with earnestness to run the race set before you. Flee from approaching wrath The wrath of God is already revealed against all unrighteousness, and soon it will be poured forth upon the head of every transgressor. Though God is patient and forbearing, he is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his glittering sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he hath ordained his arrows against those who shall finally disobey his great command to receive the Gospel of his grace. It is impossible to elude his eye, or to withstand his power. You are upon the brink of danger, if you are not already entered in this race; you stand upon a precipice, and hell from beneath has opened its mouth to receive you. But a respite is still afforded; the Lord waits to be gracious; and as yet there is room. The gate of mercy is not yet shut; 'turn, therefore, to the strong hold, as prisoners of hope;' no longer refuse his gracious invitation, or trifle with your precious souls; seek to Jesus that you may live; apply to him for faith and repentance; and, in his strength and name, prepare to run this important race. Meditate upon the glorious prize which is provided for all who endure to the end; it is freely proposed to all who run. Pardon, grace, and eternal life, are promised and bestowed, without money, and without price. If, after so many repeated calls, you still harden your hearts, and stop your ears, and determine that you will not come unto Jesus that you may have life, you must assuredly perish, without mercy and without excuse.

But if you are desirous to run, remember the admonition in my text, 'So run that you may obtain.' Your steps must be regulated by the word of God, or you will wander wide from the good old way; you must derive your sufficiency and strength from Christ by faith and prayer, or you will faint, and be unable to endure to the end. We read of some* that run well for a season, but were afterwards hindered, and turned aside. Be upon your guard; for there are many that will strive to divert you from your course. Satan, the world, and your own evil hearts, will combine and form various attempts to slacken your pace, and to withdraw your attention from the one thing needful. Dread the thoughts of stopping short, or turning back;

* Gal. v. 7.

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and the more you meet with opposition, be so much the more earnest to redouble your diligence, and especially to cry mightily to him who is able to keep you from falling, to preserve you unblameable in love while here, and at last to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Believers, why are not we as wise in our generation as the children of the world? We see how those who are fond of a common horse race are thinking and talking of it, and preparing for it every day. Does not their diligence shame us, who are so cold, faint, and dilatory, in the most important and honourable concerns? Let us gird up the loins of our mind; some of you have not far to run now; you have taken many a weary step since you were first called; but the end is at hand; the period of your complete salvation is now much nearer than when you first believed.* Think of Jesus, the forerunner and the judge; he has already entered within the vail for us, his eye is upon us, he is near to assist, and waiting to receive us. May his Spirit and his example animate us to press forward to the prize of our high calling, to tread down every difficulty, and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life.†

SERMON XVII.

NO ACCESS TO GOD BUT BY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

THERE is no question that can arise in the mind of man, that is of so high importance as this in my text, and yet, alas! how seldom is it laid to heart! May the Spirit of God impress it upon all your consciences! You are now come before God to worship; ask yourselves, wherewith? On what do you ground your hope that you offer acceptable service? You must shortly

* Rom. xiii. 11. † Rev. ii. 10.

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appear before him in judgment. Are* you prepared to meet him? What plea have you provided? Take heed in time. Be sure that it is such a one as he will admit, lest your hopes should fail, and you perish in his presence as chaff before the devouring flame.

The passage plainly expresses the inquiry of an awakened mind. It is to be feared many of you have often read these words without being suitably affected with their meaning. But if you can indeed make them your own, if you are truly solicitous how you are to come before God both here and hereafter, I hope his good Spirit will enable you to receive satisfaction from the answer given by the prophet.

If you can speak these words from your heart, you will readily acknowledge that they imply the following things:—

1. A sense of duty: that you are under an obligation to come and bow before the high God. You are sensible that you ought not, and you find that you cannot live without paying him homage and worship, but that he has a right to your service, and expects it. Too many show, in this respect, that they are dead while they live; dead to God, insensible and regardless of their many obligations to him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being. They live without prayer; they offer no praises to the God of their lives, but rise up and lie down, go out and come in, without one reflection on his power, goodness, and providence; even like the beasts that perish. But the awakened soul cannot do so. He trembles to think that he once could neglect that God whom all the hosts of heaven worship; and is convinced, that however fair his character might have been amongst men, he justly deserved to have been struck to hell for so long restraining prayer before God.

2. A sense of the majesty and glory of God. Whoever seriously asks this question, has an awful view of the Lord, as the high God. Many who do not wholly neglect prayer and worship, yet have no spiritual and humbling apprehensions of the God whom they profess to serve. Their prayers, whether in public or private, are only lip-service, as though they thought him altogether such a one as ourselves. Their petitions are not guided by their desires, but they utter with their mouths what they find in the book, though their hearts have no love or relish of the things they ask for. How often is God mocked by those who join in our established worship? Has he not been so this morning by some of you? How little he is reverenced by many is plain from the little regard they pay to his commands. They

* Amos iv. 12.

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will break his Sabbaths, blaspheme his name, live in drunkenness, whoredom, anger, and malice, and yet pretend to worship him. But those who rightly understand the inquiry in my text, cannot do thus. They consider him as the high God; they know that he humbles himself to behold even the worship of heaven, and are therefore struck with this thought, Wherewith can I, a poor worm, who am but dust and ashes, come before this high God?

3. A sense of guilt. Alas! says the soul that is enlightened to see itself, I am not only *mean*, but *vile*. 'I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?* wherewith shall such a polluted, obnoxious creature as I am, appear before a holy God? Can my services atone for my sins, or what service can I perform that is not defiled and rendered unworthy of acceptance by the evil of my heart? But could I perform ever so well from this day forward, what would this avail for what is past? If I had offended a man like myself, I might think of making some amends; but my sins are against God. His justice, wisdom, holiness, and truth, have all demands upon me. What then can I bring? Will sacrifices appease him? No: these, though of his own appointment, are not of themselves sufficient. 'It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.'† Though all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills were mine, though I should offer all Lebanon, hills of frankincense, rivers, yea, ten thousands of rivers of oil, all would not do. Or should I give my son, my only son, the fruit of my body, neither would this atone for the sin of my soul.

Here, then, you may see that to an awakened sinner sin is the heaviest burden imaginable. He is willing, and would be glad (if it might be) to purchase the pardon of sin with the loss of every thing he accounts most valuable. If he had the whole world, he would freely part with it to be free from guilt. But at the same time he finds it a burden that he cannot shake off; he knows that he never can be delivered for any thing he can do or propose, and therefore the great subject of inquiry always upon his mind is, Wherewith, or how shall I appear and stand before the high God!

I hope some of you are thus minded; to you I have a comfortable message from the other part of my text. But as I cannot hope thus of you all, I must previously take notice that there is hardly any one passage in the Bible more generally misunderstood, and which ignorant and careless men are more prone to wrest to their own destruction, than the verses under our present consideration. Not a few, having their eyes blinded by the god

* Job vii. 20. † Heb. x. 4.

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of this world, and their hearts enslaved to the love and practice of sin, are content to understand it as if it was rather a rebuke than an encouragement to them, who, like* the jailor, are deeply affected with a concern for the salvation of their souls. Their comment is to this purpose, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;' that is, you need not terrify yourself at this rate; there is nothing so evil in sin, or so awful in God's threatenings, as you suppose. He has said, indeed, 'The soul that sinneth shall die;'† yet here you see an easy way to escape, 'Do justly,' (which is, being interpreted,) Do not grossly cheat and injure your neighbour; abstain from robbery, extortion, and heavy oppression, and 'love mercy;' that is, be ready to do what are commonly called good-natured offices, and to give a shilling or a guinea (according to your circumstances) now and then to the poor, and you will be safe enough. How they explain the other clause, 'walk humbly,' upon this plan, I confess myself unable to conceive, and therefore I believe they are glad to omit it; for I am sure light cannot be more contrary to darkness, than such language as this is opposite to the idea of walking humbly with God.

According to this opinion, to do justly, and to love mercy, are the whole of religion. They are, indeed, essential parts of it; and miserable will you be who talk in this strain, if God, at the great day, should judge you by this text to which you now presumptuously appeal. How wonderful is the pride and arrogance of fallen man, who will dare to urge a plea before God which must issue in his own confusion! Do you indeed deal justly? It implies something more than not being an arrant knave. Do you at all times, and in all respects, behave to every person as you would they should do unto you? Did you never take the least advantage of the ignorance or necessity of your neighbour? Did you never speak or report any thing to his prejudice without sufficient warrant and sufficient cause? You feel how tender you are of your own character and interests. Have you been equally tender of the interests of others, of all others with whom you have had connexions, without being influenced in any instance or degree by partiality or mercenary views? If you cannot appeal to the Searcher of hearts that you have walked in this integrity, your pretence that you have done justly is vile hypocrisy, and you may tremble to think how easily you may be condemned out of your own mouth. Alas! if God, to whom all your thoughts and actions have been incessantly exposed, should enter into

* Acts xvi. 30. † Ezek. xviii. 4.

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judgment with you, how unable would you be to answer him in one of a thousand?

Again, Do you love mercy? Do you *love* it as a miser loves money? Is it the pleasure of your hearts to overcome evil with good? If your brother or neighbour offend you, not seven times, but seventy times seven,* do you find it delightful to repeat your forgiveness, to bless them that curse you, to pray for them that despitefully use you, and to requite repeated injuries with repeated acts of kindness? If not, what have you to do with mercy, either to pretend that you love mercy yourselves, or to indulge a hope of obtaining mercy from God, if you know no better way of seeking it than by your own works. But suppose you was less culpable in these particulars, can you say that you walk humbly with God? Alas! how impossible is this, while you trust in your own righteousness, while you slight and despise his threatenings, while your hearts rise against his Gospel. Are you not impatient under the afflictions which he sends, and unthankful for innumerable mercies which he is daily bestowing upon you? And is this to walk humbly with God? Bear with me for a plain word, which I purposely speak plainly, that it may not be forgot: I say, that if any man or woman can be saved in this way, that is, upon the account of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, then Satan himself has no cause to despair.

I return now to those who see and acknowledge themselves to be sinners, without righteousness and strength, and are desirous to appear before God with comfort. To you I bring good tidings; the Lord help you to believe and rejoice. He hath showed you that which is good, which is the only and sufficient ground whereon to build your hopes: he has showed or revealed it, for otherwise you could never have found it out. What the law cannot do in that it is weak and ineffectual through the flesh, God has done by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.† The Lord Jesus Christ is that *good* to which the prophet refers; Moses and the prophets, and all the Scriptures, testify of him, and Micah among the rest. One of the most illustrious testimonies to the person and office of our Immanuel in the Old Testament, is to be found in the chapter preceding my text. 'But thou, Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in

* Matt. xviii. 22. † Rom. viii. 3.

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the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace.'* All other sacrifices and Saviours are insufficient; but Jesus, by the one offering of himself once offered up, hath made a full, perfect, and everlasting atonement, and now he reigns in our nature, possessed of all the fulness of grace, exercising the power of God in the salvation of men. Would you then come before the High God? come in the name of Jesus, and you shall find acceptance. In him God is well pleased;† and for his sake he is well pleased with all who honour his beloved Son, and put their trust in him. He has authority and compassion sufficient to save the most deplorable and the most unworthy. If you read the history of his life and death, you will read of a display of love and grace beyond expression; and he is the same still. Before he ascended he left an assurance for your encouragement, that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. If you say, I want faith, remember it is his gift, and he has promised to do whatever you ask in his name. Therefore fight against unbelief, resist Satan with the sword of the Spirit. If it is suggested that you are a great sinner, you cannot deny it, *nor need you;* avow the charge, take shame to yourselves, and give glory to God; but it is equally true, that Jesus is a great Saviour, he is able to save to the uttermost; and though your iniquities are great, yet cast not away your hope, for his mercy is greater than the heavens.

When you come in this way, what does the Lord require of you? Is it to make your own peace? He would as soon require you to make a new heaven and a new earth. Is it to keep your own soul? No more than he requires you to keep the sun in its course. His own arm has wrought salvation, and he will secure it. He requires none of your help here; nay, he disdains the thought: you might as well offer to help him to govern the world. But this he requires of you, 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;' and the methods of his grace will enable you to do so.

1. 'To do justly.' We are by nature attached to worldly goods, and wholly influenced by selfish principles. But faith in Jesus communicates new motives, views, and aims, to the soul: it teaches us to have our treasure in heaven; to sit loose to the world; to be satisfied with that station and competence which Divine Providence has allotted us; and to love our neighbours as ourselves, because they are our fellow-sinners, and are capable of being called to a participation with us in the honourable rela-

* Micah v. 2—5. † Matt. iii. 17.

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tion and privilege of the children of God. Upon these principles the practice of justice is attainable, but upon no other; for though there are many characters honourable and blameless in the outward concerns of life, and in the judgment of men, there is no person upon earth who does or can love or practise justice in its full extent till he has received the Spirit of Christ, and lives upon him by faith, for wisdom and strength from day to day.

2. 'To love mercy.' None can truly love it but those who have tasted it. When your hearts feel the comforts of God's pardoning love you will delight to imitate him. When you can truly rejoice that he has freely forgiven you that immense debt, which is expressed by ten thousand talents,* you will have no desire to take your fellow-servant by the throat for a few pence. This sense of God's goodness, and the continued need you find of his renewed mercy from day to day, will soften your spirit, (if you are a believer,) disarm and gradually weaken every proud thought that would plead for the exercise of anger and resentment towards those who have offended you. You will be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; you will put on (as the beloved of God) bowels of meekness,* long-suffering, and compassion, forbearing and forgiving, if you have aught against any; because God, for Christ's sake has freely forgiven you. If you find this practice difficult, it is owing partly to the remaining depravity of your nature, and partly because you have had but a faint sense of his mercy. Pray for a more powerful manifestation of it, and you will do better: mercy will be your delight.

3. 'To walk humbly.' 'Can two walk together except they are agreed?'‡ When Christ is your peace, you will delight in God; you will set him before you, commune with him, study to please him, and to keep all his commandments. This is to *walk* with God; and you will walk *humbly*, remembering how much you owe to free grace, and how far you fall short in your best endeavours. These considerations, impressed by the Holy Spirit, will humble you, will keep you from being high in your own esteem, wise in your own conceit, and from seeking great things for yourself. You will be habitually thankful when the Lord gives, content when he withholds, patient when he afflicts. You will confess yourself unworthy of the smallest mercies you possess, and acknowledge in your heaviest trials that he has laid far less upon you than your iniquities have deserved.

* Matt. xviii. 24. † Col. iii. 12. ‡ Amos iii. 3.

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This is the pattern we are to copy after, and this is the certain tendency and effect of his grace. A measure of this disposition is found in all who are Christians indeed. Yet we may take shame to ourselves, that we are still so far defective in every branch of our duty. Let us stir up ourselves to greater diligence, watchfulness, and prayer, that we may obtain more lively, abiding, and transforming views of that which is our true good, that so we may be enabled to glorify our heavenly Father, and to adorn our profession, by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

SERMON XVIII.

OF A LIVING AND A DEAD FAITH.

JAMES ii. 26.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

WHOEVER has read the Scriptures with attention, must have observed several passages which at first view, and till thoroughly examined and compared, appear hard to reconcile to each other. No instance of this sort is more remarkable than the seeming difference of judgment between St. Paul and St. James on the point of justification. St. Paul having said, 'That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,'* produces the example of Abraham to confirm his assertion. St. James, (in the chapter before us,) from the example of the same Abraham, draws a conclusion which seems directly to contradict this: 'Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.'† Can any two opinions be more opposite in appearance? How then can both be true, or how can we believe both writers infallible in their doctrine, and influenced by the unerring Spirit of God? Must we cleave to the one and reject the other? and if so, how shall we know which is the real truth?

We may confidently answer, The apostles are both right; their doctrine is equally from God, and does not clash in any particular.

* Rom. iii. 28. † James ii. 24.

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The darkness and difficulty is in the apprehensions of men, and not in the word of God. Yet a difficulty there is, and I hope I shall not detain you unprofitably at this time, by endeavouring to clear it, and afterwards to press upon you the words of my text as a proper inference from the whole.

When men who are strangers to Christian experience, and who trust more to their own sagacity and learning than to the word and Spirit of God, attempt to resolve cases of this sort, they make strange work. And it is no wonder; for how can any one explain what he does not understand? It would tire you if I should relate a tenth part of the conjectures of learned men upon this very subject. I shall mention one or two as a specimen. A writer of some eminence in the world, confesses the difficulty I have noticed in its full strength. He allows and affirms, that it is not only hard but impossible, to reconcile the apostles to each other; and concludes, that since it is impossible to hold both their sentiments, we must abide by him who wrote the last. This, from many arguments his learning furnished him with, he thinks to have been St. James. Accordingly, he gives up the other, and his doctrine of faith without works to shift for themselves. He supposes that St. Paul, in the heat of his argument, carried the matter a little too far, and that St. James wrote afterwards to correct him.

But to show you (excuse a familiar expression) how doctors differ, and at the same time to warn even true believers against hastily judging beyond the line of their experience, I would observe, that the great servant of God, Luther, soon after he began to preach the Gospel, made a mistake no less bold and presuming on the other side of the question. He had felt the power of St. Paul's doctrine in his own soul, and would have defied an angel that should have dared to oppose it; therefore, when his adversaries pressed him with the authority of St. James, not having at that time light to give a more solid answer, he ventured to deny the authenticity of the whole epistle, and rashly insisted, both in his sermons and books, that St. James never wrote it. But Luther, though mistaken in this point, was under the Lord's teaching; he went on from strength to strength, increasing in knowldge and grace; and when his judgment was better informed, he publicly retracted his former unguarded aversion.

Leaving, therefore, the authority of men, let us betake ourselves to the word of God, and humbly seek the light of his Spirit, who is promised to guide his people in their sincere inquiries after truth.

Now, if you consider the scope and design of our apostles, and take in the context, I hope this seeming opposition will be soon

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removed. St. Paul is evidently treating on the great point of a sinner's justification in the sight of God; he shows that it cannot be of the law, because by the law all men were already condemned, and because then boasting could not be excluded; but that it was freely by grace, through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus. His reasoning will appear to greater advantage by perusing the whole passage, than by producing a few detached sentences. After he had summed up the evidence with respect both to Jews and Gentiles, and pronounced his verdict, that every mouth must be stopped, and that the whole world stood guilty before God, he proceeds thus: 'Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight! for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.'* And because the Jews had a high opinion of Abraham, he proceeds in the next chapter to show that Abraham was justified in the same way. 'For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'† The circumstance in Abraham's life referred to is, when he believed the promise of God, that though he was then childless, he should be the father of many nations;‡ and that particularly from him should proceed the Messiah, the promised seed, in whom both he himself and all the families of the earth should be blessed.

St. James expressly treats of those who rested in a notion which they called faith, and accounted sufficient for their salvation, though it had no influence upon their hearts, tempers, and conduct. He shows that their hope is vain, because such a faith

* Rom. iii. 20—28. † Rom. iv. 3—5. ‡ Gen. xii. 3. xvii. 4.

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as this the devils have. And he proves, by the example of Abraham, that his faith was very different from theirs, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience, the offering up of his only son. 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can (this)* faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, (confirmed,) which saith Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.'† It is exceeding plain that he had not the same thing in view which St. Paul had; for the incident to which he here refers happened a great many years after Abraham had been declared justified in the sight of God.

The sum is, the one declares that nothing renders us acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that such a faith, when true and genuine, is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work. The one speaks of the justification of our persons, this is by faith only; the other of the justification of our profession, this is by faith not alone, but working by love, and producing obedience.

St. James has some view in speaking of Rahab;‡ and, by producing her as a confirmation, it is still more evident, that he is only considering works as the proofs of our sincerity. We have no sure ground to conclude that Rahab, in the act of receiving the spies, and at that time, had any saving faith, or any view to the Messiah and the covenant of grace; though it is most probable she had after she was joined to the people of Israel, and became acquainted with divine revelation. But in Jericho her thoughts seemed to have been confined to a temporal deliverance; and the profession of faith which she made to the spies implies no

* ἡ πίστις, *this* faith. † James ii. 14—24. ‡ James ii. 25.

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more. 'And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites. And as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt; neither did there remain any more courage in any man, beeause of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house; and give me a true token.'* Had she said thus, and yet delivered the spies up the king of Jericho, it would have proved that she did not speak from her heart; but her profession was justified by receiving them into her house, concealing them from the search made after them, and sending them away in peace. Surely this conduct of Rahab will be sufficient to condemn many who would be thought Christians.

We may therefore deduce two propositions, perfectly consistent with each other, from the passage in question.

1. That there is no acceptance for any of the sons of Adam, with the just and holy God, but through Jesus Christ as our righteousness received by faith, and that in this concern, works of every kind are absolutely excluded.

This is the capital doctrine of the Gospel; it is not only clearly asserted in innumerable passages both of the Old Testament and the New, but is St. Paul's express subject and design in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Though he was yielding and compliant in many things of less importance, and was willing to become all things to all men, yet he would not give place, no, not for an hour, to any who offered to invalidate this foundation-truth. He declares, that to mix any thing, to contend for any qualification or observance, as of necessary influence to concur with the perfect work of Christ in the justification of a sinner, is to darken, alter, and destroy the gospel which he preached; and denounces an anathema against every one who should be guilty of this presumption, yea, though he should be (if such† a thing was possible) an angel from heaven. How cordially he rested his own hope upon the truth which he proposed to others, he declares elsewhere, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in

* Joshua ii. 9—12. † Gal. i. 8, 9.

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him,* not having mine own righteousness, which is of the† law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith.'

If this is the scriptural doctrine, let each one examine on what ground you stand. Has God appointed one way of salvation, and will any of you dare to propose another? This would be both wicked and dangerous: 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.‡ You may please yourselves now with what you account your good works; but when God shall 'lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,'§ none will be able to abide his appearance but those who can plead a righteousness perfectly answerable to the law's demands, which can only be found in Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

And as this doctrine is of so great and essential importance, beware how you listen to any other. Take heed how you hear;‖ be not influenced by the names, characters, or stations of men, when the salvation of your souls is at stake. Prize the liberty which, as Protestants and Britons, you enjoy, of bringing every doctrine to the trial of God's word, and freely use it. I account it my honour and happiness that I preach to a free people, who have the Bible in their hands. To your Bibles I appeal. I entreat, I charge you, to receive nothing upon my word any further than I prove it from the word of God; and bring every preacher, and every sermon that you hear, to the same standard. If this is the truth, you had need to be well established in it; for it is not the current and fashionable doctrine of the times. Let me then further recommend to you (it is a direction our Lord has given) to examine doctrines by their effects: 'by their fruits ye shall know them.'¶ The truths of God, when faithfully preached, in humble dependence upon his blessing, will be attested by his power. At such times, and in such places, a visible change will soon be observable in some or more of the hearers: they cease to do evil, they learn to do well: they acknowledge God in all their ways, and glorify him before men, by living according to his precepts. And if you ask them the reason of this change, they will freely ascribe it to the blessing of God upon that sort of preaching which by too many is accounted foolishness.**

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

† Ex νομου, of law: that is, of *any law whatsoever*, not of *the* law, as if he only meant the Jewish law. The article του seems here to be purposely left out.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 11. § Isa. xxviii. 17. ‖ Mark iv. 24. Luke viii. 18.
¶ Matt. vii. 16. ** 1 Cor. i. 21.

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On the other hand, we are not afraid to challenge those who are most acquainted with men and books, to produce instances of the same effects wrought by any other doctrine than that which commends the Lord Christ in his person, offices, and power, as the only object of a sinner's hope. How much is said and wrote to tell people what they should be, and what they should do! yet where these principles are not enforced there is nothing effectually done, nothing indeed attempted beyond a formal round of dull and heartless service: a little something that looks like religion on the Lord's day; to appear in church at the summons of the bell, to repeat words because other people do the same, to hear what is delivered from the pulpit with little attention or affection, unless something occurs that is suited to exalt self, or to soothe conscience, and then to run with eagerness into the world again.

Or if here and there a person is truly touched by the secret influence and guidance of the Spirit of God, where this evangelical doctrine is not publicly maintained, the consequence always is, that they renounce the things which they before held for truths, are brought into that way of thinking which is agreeable to St. Paul's doctrine, and receive it gladly whenever it comes in their way.

It must be allowed, however, at the same time, that there are counterfeit professors, whose religion lies in notions, and who, while they profess to believe in God, in works deny him; by reason of whom the ways of truth are evil spoken of.* This the apostles have taught us to expect: nay, it was so from the beginning, even while the apostles were themselves personally with the churches. To such St. James addresses the passage I have been reading to you, of which my text is the conclusion; and as I dare not hope that there are none such in this great assembly, it is highly proper, that before I conclude I shall take notice of a second proposition which naturally offers from the subject we have had in hand; and more especially from the reasoning of St. James and from the words of my text.

2. That true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has a prevailing and habitual influence upon the hearts and lives of those who possess it; and that they are vain men, and deceivers of themselves, who pretend to faith in him, while their lives and conversations show them to be enslaved to the love of the world, and the dominion of sin. The apostle, to inspire us with a just abhorrence of this false profession, makes use of two comparisons which are exceeding striking. May God open the eyes of those

* 2 Pet. ii. 2.

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who are concerned in it, to perceive and tremble at the justness and horror of the resemblance.

1st. He compares it to the faith of devils: 'Thou believest there is one God; thou dost well. The devils also believe, and tremble.'* Are there any here whom it is needful to address in this harsh manner? My dear brethren, bear with me; I wish you well, and would willingly rejoice in every good appearance; but alas! how little does it signify what you believe, or what you say, unless your acknowledged principles have an effect upon your conduct!

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? so does Satan. Do you believe the election of God, the sovereignty of grace, the perseverance of the saints? It is possible the devil may have a more extensive knowledge in these doctrines than the wisest of men; yet this benefits him not; it is not want of knowledge, but want of love, that makes him what he is.

The only effect mentioned of the faith of devils is, that it increases their terror, and aggravates their guilt. They believe, (there are no sceptics in hell,) and tremble. Is not this too much the case of some of you? If you knew less, you would be easier at last, and less inexcusable; and yet perhaps you mistake your state, and think yourselves on this account far less blameable than you really are. Perhaps sometimes, when you reflect sincerely on your ways, and how strangely you are hurried to act contrary to the convictions which the preaching of the Gospel forces upon you, you are ready to charge the Lord and his dispensations hardly, and to say, O that he would give me his grace! but if not, what can I do without it? Let conscience now speak faithfully, and it will tell you that if you are condemned, it will not be for what you cannot do, but for wilfully refusing to improve the power already given you. When I tell you, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord with comfort, and that you must break off from your vain company and evil practices if you expect or desire to be saved, you know that I speak the truth; and your looks often testify that you feel the force of it. Now, while the word of God is sounding in your ears, you perhaps are thinking, 'It is time, high time indeed, to break off; though the Lord has forborn me long, he will surely strike at last, if I go on thus.' And yet, alas! what I have formerly seen gives me much cause to fear that to-morrow, or the next time they entice you, you will consent again. But could I tell you that by going a different way you might gain a sum of money; or could make it appear that the next time you went to such a place your house would

*James ii. 19.

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certainly be robbed, I make no doubt but you would forbear. And yet gold is not grace. It is then plain that you have power, but your will is in fault. God has enlighted your conscience; but you rebel against it. O repent, while there is yet space afforded. Call upon the name of Jesus? who knows but he may even yet deliver you!

2dly. He compares it to a dead carcass, which is not only unprofitable, but loathsome and offensive. May God show you today how odious your profession is in his sight! for by assenting to the truths of the Gospel, and outwardly favouring the cause, and the instrument whom the Lord has raised up to promote it, you are so far professors. May he enable you to be not only almost, but altogether Christians! for while you thus halt between two opinions, and stand divided between God and the world, you are an abomination to God, a grief to his people, a stumbling-block to the ignorant, and are, (if this was of any weight in comparison of what I have already said) secretly despised by those who pretend to court your acquaintance. Your guilt is in some respects more aggravated, and your example unspeakably more mischievous, than either would be if you openly rejected the truth. You stand in the rank of those wicked servants who know their master's will, but do it not. The great judge has determined concerning these, that they shall be beaten with many stripes.* Awake to righteousness, and sin not; look up to Jesus, who is exalted to bestow both faith and repentance, that you may no longer be torn in pieces by those inward contentions, but experience that peace which passes all understanding.†

* Luke xii. 48. † Phil. iv. 7.

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SERMON XIX.

GUILT REMOVED, AND PEACE RESTORED.

PSALM li. 15.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

THE history of David is full of instruction. Every thing recorded of him affords us either consolation or caution. In his example, we see much of the sovereign power and providence of God. When a youth, though the least of his father's house, he was singled out, and called from following sheep, to rule a kingdom. We see him supported through a variety of difficulties, and at length established in his throne, to the amazement and confusion of his enemies. In him likewise we have a striking proof of the evil that is in the heart of man. Who would have thought it, that David, the man so highly favoured, so wonderfully preserved, the man after God's own heart, who in the time of his distress could say, 'My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God;* that he should be in an unguarded hour seduced, surprised, and led captive of the devil! From gazing he proceeds to adultery, from adultery, to murder, and at length sinks into such a stupid frame of mind, that an express message from God was needful to convince him of his sin. And in this circumstance we further see the riches of divine grace and mercy; how tenderly the Lord watches over his sheep, how carefully he brings them back when wandering from him, and with what rich goodness he heals their back-slidings, and loves them freely. David was fallen, but not lost. 'The thing which he had done displeased the Lord.'† Yet his loving kindness and faithfulness were unutterable. He was interested in that covenant, 'which is well ordered in all things and sure;'‡ and therefore, when he confessed his sin the Lord assured him, by his servant Nathan, that 'he had put away his sin, and he should not die for it.'§

However, though the Lord is thus gracious in passing by the iniquity of his children, yet he will let them know, by sorrowful experience, that 'it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against him.'‖ Though he will not cast off, he will chasten; he will

* Psalm xlii 2. † 2 Sam. xi. 27. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.
§ 2 Sam. xii. 13. ‖ Jer. ii. 19.

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withdraw his presence, and suspend his gracious influences; and this to a sensible heart is a heavy punishment. Though David was delivered from the fear of death and hell, he penned this psalm in the bitterness of his soul. He did not consider the Lord as his enemy, but as a friend and father, whom he had greatly offended. He longed to be reconciled; but could not as yet recover his former confidence. He hoped, indeed, that a time of refreshment *would* come from his presence; and therefore he continued waiting; but for the present he made heavy complaints, that his bones were broken, and his mouth stopped. He had lost his strength and life, and found he could not restore himself. He was struck dumb by his late fall; and therefore he breathes out this prayer, 'O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.'

From these words I propose to consider that mournful case, which too often happens in the Christian life, when the believer's mouth is stopped and his lips closed, so that he cannot show forth the praises of his God. And in this view,

1. I shall point out to you the persons who have reason to make this complaint.

2. Explain what is implied in their lips being thus shut up.

3. Show you by what means the Lord opens the closed lips. And,

4. I shall observe, that when a person's lips are thus opened, his mouth, and all that is within him, will certainly show forth the Lord's praise. May the Holy Spirit apply the word, and command a blessing upon the whole!

I. This petition especially suits two sorts of persons.

1. The *backsliding* believer; one who has formerly known the goodness of God; has rested in his love, and rejoiced in his salvation; 'has tasted that the Lord is gracious,'* and walked with comfort in the way of his commandments; but at length, by an unguarded conduct, or by building wood, hay, and stubble, upon the Lord's foundation,† has grieved the good Spirit of God, and he is withdrawn. The comforter‡ and instructor of his soul is far from him; and therefore he sits in darkness and silence. He only retains a sense of his loss, and can do no more than sigh out this prayer: 'O Lord, open thou my lips.'

2. The *doubting* believer. The unbelieving believer, if I may be allowed the expression, I mean one who has been deeply convinced of sin, and taught, by the Spirit of God, that there is no salvation but in the Lord Jesus Christ. One who loves the word,

* 1 Pet. ii. 3. † 1 Cor. iii. 11—13. ‡ Lam. i. 16.

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and ways, and people of God, who is careful to the utmost of his power to abstain from the evil that is in the world, and esteems 'the loving kindness of the Lord to be better than life.'* One at whom the enemy has often thrust sore that he might fall,† but the Lord has secretly upheld him through many a bitter hour, and he finds he is not cut off yet, though he perhaps expects it every day. Such as these have, indeed, sufficient ground to say, 'If the Lord was not on my side, I had been swallowed up long ago.'‡ They have reason to conclude, with David, 'By this, if by nothing else, I know that thou favourest me, seeing my enemies, who have assaulted me so continually, have not yet prevailed against me.'§ But yet, through a sense of past guilt, a sight of present corruptions, the prevalence of unbelief, the workings of a legal spirit, the want of a clear apprehension of the Lord's way of justifying the ungodly, and from the force of Satan's temptations, who is exceeding busy to press all these things upon the heart, their mouths are stopped likewise. They cannot believe, and therefore they cannot speak. However, there are seasons and intervals when they obtain a little glimpse of hope, and then the whole desire of their souls is expressed in the words of my text. 'O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.'

II. I proceed to consider what may be included in this case, what it is to have the mouth stopped. The persons I have mentioned have the same liberty of speech in common affairs as others; but because they cannot converse freely with him, who notwithstanding all their doubts, and fears, and follies, still maintains a secret hold of their souls, they account themselves no better than dumb. They cannot speak *to* the Lord, nor *of* him, nor *for* him, as they wish and ought to do. These are the three heads of their complaint, and therefore they sigh, and say, 'O Lord, open thou my lips.'

1. Alas! says the believer that has sinned, and lost his strength, 'O that it was with me as in times past!'‖ I well remember when I had freedom of access, and found it good to draw near to my God; when I could pour out all my complaints and cares before him, and leave them with him. I remember the time when my heart was overwhelmed within me, and my spirit was burdened.¶ I saw myself a wretched, helpless sinner. Innumerable evils took hold of me. I thought I was marked out for destruction. I found Satan at my right hand, waiting for a permission to seize my soul, and make me his prey for ever.** I

* Psal. lxiii. 3. † Psal. cxviii. 13. ‡ Psal. cxxiv. 3. § Psal. xli. 11.
‖ Job xxix. 2. ¶ Psal. cxlii. 3. ** Zech. iii. 1.

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looked round, but saw no way to escape, and gave up all for lost. But, O! I remember, when none in heaven or earth could help me, how the Lord drew 'near to me in the day of my distress,* and said unto my soul, fear not, I am thy salvation.' He revealed himself as an almighty, suitable Saviour. He said, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.'† 'He brought me out of the horrible pit, and miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.'‡ 'He brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.'§ This was the beginning; but it was not all. Many a gracious visit he favoured me with afterwards. O the sweet hours of secret prayer! O the happy communion in which I walked with him all the day long! 'Then, in the multitude of thoughts within me, his comforts refreshed my soul.'‖ Then I could smile at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world. Every blessing of common providence was doubly welcome, for I could read his name of love written upon it: and every affliction brought resignation and peace, because I saw my Father's hand in it, and found at a throne of grace renewed strength always suited to my need. Happy were those times: but, alas! they are gone. I could hardly then persuade myself that I should be moved any more. I little thought there was such desperate wickedness in my heart, that, after so much experience of his goodness, I should foolishly wander from him again. But, O! what a change have I lived to see! I have grieved that good Spirit of God by which I was sealed, and now I find myself in the hands of my enemies. The Lord hides himself and stands afar off; and I have lost the power of prayer. Those precious promises which once were the joy of my soul, which I could boldly plead at the throne of grace, and say, all these are mine, have no longer any power or sweetness; I read them, but I cannot feel them; and my trials and sins, which once I could cast upon my Saviour, and find instant relief, are now a heavy burden, too great for me to bear. Mercies have lost their relish, and afflictions have lost their usefulness; since neither the one nor the other are of force to stir up my soul to prayer, 'O Lord, open thou my lips.'

I remember, likewise, when I had this freedom in speaking *with* God, how pleasing it was to me to speak *of* him. My heart was full, and running over with a sense of his goodness, so that it was my meat and drink to say, 'Come unto me all you that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul.'¶ Then the

* Lam. iii. 57. † Job xxxiii. 24. ‡ Psalm xl. 2.
§ Cant. ii. 3, 4. ‖ Psalm xciv. 19. ¶ Psalm lxvi. 16.

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company of his people was delightful indeed. The meanest of his children that would sit and hear me speak of his loving-kindness, was precious to me: I esteemed them the excellent of the earth,* in whom was all my delight. 'We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company.'† And I thank God I love them still; but I can neither help them, nor be helped by them, as in times past. In vain they say unto me, 'Come, sing us one of the songs of Zion. Alas! how can I sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land? My harp is hung upon the willows, my tongue cleaveth to the roof of my mouth.'‡ I dwell in darkness and silence, as those who have been long dead. 'O Lord, open thou my lips.'

And when I could thus speak *to* God, and *of* him, I had likewise liberty to speak *for* him. 'I was then very jealous for the Lord of hosts.'§ It wounded my soul to hear his name profaned, to see his commandments broken, and his Gospel slighted. I had a tender concern for poor sinners. I could not but wish that, if possible, every person I met might know what I knew, and feel what I felt. And especially where I had friendship and influence, I was ready to improve it to the best purpose. 'The love of Christ constrained me to lay myself out for his service.'‖ I could not but oppose sin and self-righteousness, and plead the cause of my Saviour upon every occasion. 'I was not¶ ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for I felt it the power of God unto salvation in my own soul,' and durst recommend it to every one, as the only balm for sin and sorrow. But now 'the crown is fallen from my head; wo unto me that I have sinned!'** I am shut out from the fountain, and all my streams are dried up. My comforts and my usefulness are declined together. 'O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.'

Such is the complaint of the backslider in heart, when he is filled with his own ways.

And, 2. This, with a little variation, will suit the doubting, tempted soul too. These will confess, that the experience I have described is the desire of their hearts. Such communication with God, such a freedom in his ways, such a zeal for his service, is the very thing they mean, when they entreat the Lord to open their lips. And, indeed, they cannot, they dare not deny but they have at times had some little tastes of them, otherwise they would not know what I mean. For these things are, to the natural

* Psalm xvi. 4. † Psalm lv. 14. ‡ Psalm cxxxvii. 3—5.
§ 1 Kings xix. 10. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 14. ¶ Rom. i. 16.
** Lam. v. 16.

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man, the merest folly imaginable; he understands them not, therefore he despises them; nay, he hates them with a perfect hatred, and opposes them with all his heart. But still they complain under a present burden. One dark hour of temptation blots out all the traces of comfort they have known, and they refuse consolation. They will insist on it, I have neither part nor lot in the matter; I cannot get near him, and I fear I never shall. When I attempt to pray, a sense of my sins and sinfulness stops my mouth. I see the Lord not upon the golden mercy-seat, but upon the fiery throne of justice, and I am ready to call upon the rocks and mountains to hide me from his presence. When I would commune with his people, I am silenced by that dreadful word, 'What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant into thy mouth?'* When I would bear my feeble testimony for him in the world, conscience alarms me, and says, 'Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?'† And then 'The enemy comes in like a flood,'‡ with, 'God has forsaken him; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him.'§ Thus 'I spend my days in groaning, and water my couch with tears.'‖

This is a heavy case indeed; and would be insupportable, but that the faithful Shepherd, in a secret, unseen way, affords timely succour, and sets bounds to the raging enemy, beyond which he cannot pass, 'hitherto shalt thou come;'** thus far thou art permitted to vex, and wound, and tear, but no further. The Lord knows our frame, and has promised with 'every temptation to provide either strength to endure, or a way to escape.'†† Two things are proper to be mentioned for the encouragement of such souls to wait on and expect deliverance.

The first is, The examples of his saints. Think not your lot strange, as though some new and unheard-of thing had befallen you. Thousands, and ten thousands, now in glory, have tasted, yea, drank deeply of this cup before you. And many yet upon earth, who are now rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, have said in times past, as you say now, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of these enemies; the Lord hath cast me quite off, and I shall never live to see his goodness in the land of the living.'‡‡ Or, if you choose Scripture proofs, you need only read the book of Job, the Psalms, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, to be convinced, that some whom you number amongst the Lord's most eminent and highly-favoured servants, have been induced

* Psalm l. 16. † Rom. ii. 21. ‡ Isa. lix. 19.
§ Psalm lxxi. 11. ‖ Psalm vi. 6. ** Job xxxviii. 11.
†† 1 Cor. x. 13. ‡‡ 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, Psalm lxxiv. 1.

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to use such expressions as suit your case, no less than if they had been wrote for you alone. Do not they say, that 'they were broken with breach upon breach;' that the arrows of God stuck fast in them; that 'the Lord wrote bitter things against them, and counted them his enemies;' that he had shut them up within stone walls, and covered himself with a cloud, that their prayers might not pass through?'* These are but a small part of their complaints; and what can you say more than this?

Again, Consider the precious promises of the word. Are they not expressly directed to you? Do you account yourself a backslider? 'Return unto me, ye backsliding children, and I will receive you, saith the Lord.'† Do you think yourself a sinner of uncommon size? Yet, saith the Lord, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'‡ Do you say your neck is as an iron sinew, and your brow brass? Yet hear the word of the Lord, 'Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off.'§ Is there something peculiarly dreadful in your case, something that you could hardly be prevailed on to entrust to your dearest friend? Yet be not afraid: for truth has said, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'‖ But still, when we have said all, we are but miserable comforters. Even with the word of God in our mouths, we speak too often in vain. It is the Lord alone that can open the lips. And, O! that this may be the happy opportunity of his gracious appearance in favour of all here present, that our wounds may be healed, and our tongues unloosed to proclaim his praise! Lift up your hearts to him, while I endeavour to show you by what means, or in what manner the Lord is pleased to open the lips that have been long closed. This is the third particular I proposed to consider from my text.

III. I say then, that when the Lord is about to open the lips, he proceeds by the following steps:

1. He opens the eyes. We are often in a similar case with Hagar in the wilderness. The water was spent in the bottle, and she sat down in despair. There was a well or fountain close to her, sufficient to have supplied her with water to her life's end;

* Job xvi. 14. Ps. xxxviii. 2. Job xiii. 26. and xxxiii 10. Lam. iii. 9. 44.
† Jer. iii. 14. 22. ‡ Isa. i. 18. § Isa. xlvi. 12, 13.
‖ Matt. xii. 31. Isa. lv. 7.

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but she saw it not till God opened her eyes.* Just so many a poor soul is distressed, and says, My stock is spent; I had but little grace at the best, and, alas! that little is gone. And now, if the Lord should ask some *hard* thing, would you not do it to obtain a supply? You would willingly take a long journey, or part with all your wealth, to have grace abounding in your hearts; but you know you cannot expect help in this way. It is true, all contrivances of our own will have no effect; but, blessed be God, they are as needless as they would be useless. We need not dig in the earth, nor climb the skies, nor cross the seas; our remedy is *near*.† We need no costly offerings of silver or gold; our remedy is *cheap*. Come, pore no longer upon your empty bottle, but look to the fountain, the river, the ocean of all grace. May the Lord open your eyes, (as he did the eyes of Elisha's servant,‡) and I will undertake to point you to an object that shall answer all your wants. Look unto the Lord Jesus Christ; look unto him as he hung naked, wounded, bleeding, dead, and forsaken upon the cross. Look unto him again as he *now* reigns in glory, possessed of all power in heaven and in earth, with thousands and thousands of saints and angels worshipping before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministering unto him; and then compare your sins with his blood, your wants with his fulness, your unbelief with his faithfulness, your weakness with his strength, your inconstancy with his everlasting love. If the Lord opens the eyes of your understanding, you would be astonished at the comparison. Would you compare a small grain of sand upon the shore with the massy mountains which hide their heads in the clouds, and spread their roots from sea to sea? or the spark of a glow-worm with the noon-day sun? yet there is less disproportion between these than between the utmost capacity of your desires and wants, and the immense resources provided for you, in the righteousness, compassion, and power of our dear Redeemer. 'He is able to save to the uttermost;'§ and all our trouble arises chiefly from this, that our eyes are holden, so that we do not know him.‖ Therefore the first step towards opening the lips is to open our eyes, that we may see him, and look upon him by such a sight as unloosed the tongue of unbelieving Thomas, and constrained him to cry out, 'My Lord, and my God!'¶

2. When the eyes are thus opened, the Lord, in the next place, and by that as a means, opens the ear. When Christ is out of sight, we are deaf to all the calls, invitations, and promises of the

* Gen. xxi. 15—19. † Rom. x. 6—8. ‡ 2 Kings vi. 17.
§ Heb. vii. 25. ‖ Luke xxiv. 16. ¶ John xx. 28.

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Scripture. But a believing view of him who died that we might live, rouses the attention, and makes us willing and able to hear what the Lord will speak* to his people. And what does he say from the cross? 'Look unto me, and be ye saved. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me. Behold my hands, my feet, my pierced side; all this I bore for you. Be not afraid, only believe. O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? See, sinner, how I have loved thee. I have trodden the wine-press alone. I have destroyed death, and him that had the power of death. There is henceforth no condemnation to them that believe in me.'† And what does he say from his kingdom? 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. For a season you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice. Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out. I am the first and the last—that was dead and am alive. I keep the keys of death and hell, and save whom I will. Cast thy burden upon me, I will sustain thee. I will take away thy iniquity. Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace, and sin no more.'‡ *My Saviour, my God*, what words are these!

3. By opening the eye to see his excellence and power, and the ear to hear his gracious words, he in the next place opens the heart. He breaks the prison-doors, forces for himself an entrance, and sets the prisoner at liberty. He touches the rock, and the waters flow.§ Now a true and filial repentance takes place; now sin appears exceedingly sinful indeed. There was a sorrow before, but it was fruitless and ineffectual; but the sight of him who was pierced for our sins, and the welcome sound of *pardon* proclaimed in the conscience, produce a sorrow after a godly sort, a repentance never to be repented of. Thus it was with the woman who washed our Lord's feet;‖ she had been a great sinner, much was forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. Thus it was with Peter: he had been a grievious backslider; he had been with Jesus upon the mount, and saw the excellent glory; he was stout in his protestation, 'Though all men deny thee, yet will not I:' but he shrunk at the voice of a girl, and said, 'I know not the man.' When the servants spoke to him, he cursed and swore; but when Jesus looked upon him, he wept.¶ Do you think our Lord looked upon him with disdain and indignation? rather with a look of love; a look that at once convinced him of his sin, and

* Psal. lxxxv. 8.

† Isa. xlv. 22. John xii. 22. John xx. 27. Mark v. 36. Matt. xiv. 31. Isa. lxiii. 3. Heb. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Luke xxii. 32. John xvi. 22. John vi. 37. Rev. i. 17, 18. Psal. lv. 22. Micah vii. 19. Matt. ix. 2. John viii. 11.

§ Psal. lxxviii. 20. ‖ Luke vii. 38—47. ¶ Luke xxii. 61, 62.

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gave him to understand that the Lord pitied and forgave him. This look broke his heart in pieces. He went out and wept bitterly. And afterwards, though greatly humbled as to a confidence in himself, yet, when asked the question, he could boldly appeal to the searcher of hearts, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.'*

And when the eyes, the ears, the heart, are thus opened; when the understanding is enlightened, the will engaged, and the affections inflamed, the cure is wrought. Then the lips will open of course, and the mouth be filled with thanksgiving and praise. O that it would please the Lord to give to me, and to each of you, a clearer knowledge of this blessed change from heart-felt experience, than is in the power of words (of my poor words especially) to describe! 'Come,' my friends, 'Let us return unto the Lord: for he hath wounded, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.'† Verily we are all guilty in this matter; we have all provoked him by unbelief, and wandering from his good way; and therefore we live so far below our privileges, and are so often heavy and sorrowful, when we have in him grounds of continual joy. Now let us unite in this prayer, 'O Lord, open thou our lips, display thy power in the midst of us, heal all our breaches, rend the veil of our unbelief, blot out the thick clouds of our sins, cleanse us from all our iniquities and idols, and teach our stammering tongues and barren hearts to show forth the praise of thy abundant goodness.'

I proceed to observe, in the last place,

IV. That if the Lord is pleased to answer our desire, and to open your lips in this manner, then you will surely praise him. You will praise him with your mouths, and in your lives; you will thankfully acknowledge his mercy, his power, and his wisdom.

1. You will praise his mercy. Is the cooling stream welcome to the thirsty soul? Is a reprieve acceptable to a poor condemned malefactor? Still more welcome is a sense of pardoning love to a soul that has felt the evil and effects of sin. What, to be taken from the dunghill,‡ and made a companion with princes! to have all our guilt and complaints removed at once! to be snatched as it were from the brink of hell, and placed in the very suburbs of heaven! to be able to say, 'O Lord, thou wast [justly] angry with me, [and I went mourning under a sense of thy dipleasure;] but [now] thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.'§ Is not this a mercy? especially considering how unde-

* John xxi. 17. † Hosea vi. 1. ‡ 1 Sam. ii. 8. § Isa. xii. 1.

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serving we are of the smallest favour! And further, the way in which it was conveyed! that the pardon, though free to us, is a pardon 'bought with blood:' that it cost the Lord Jesus his life, his soul, to effect that blessed reconciliation in which we are beginning to rejoice! Still more, that all we can now receive of his love is but a taste, a small thing, in comparison of what he has reserved for us! O what mercy is here! O what thanks does it call for! 'O Lord, open thou our lips, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise.'

2. You will praise his power. I thought, says the poor soul at such a time, I was fallen so low that there was no help. The more I toiled and laboured in my own strength, the further the blessing seemed from me. I know, by experience, that none but an almighty arm could relieve me. Creatures, means, and contrivances, I had tried and tried again, but found them all physicians of no value. But now, 'the right hand of the Lord has done wonderfully, the right hand of the Lord has brought mighty things to pass.'* 'What shall I say? he hath both spoken himself, and also hath done it.'† The work is his; to him be all the glory. I got not this victory by my own bow,‡ neither did my own arm save me; 'but the Lord himself has been pleased to show the exceeding greatness§ of his mighty power in my behalf.' Therefore, 'not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory and the praise.'‖

3. You will praise his wisdom. 'What I do,' said our Lord to Peter, 'thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'¶ The mourning soul often asks the question with David, 'I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forsaken me? Why go I mourning because of the enemy?** When the Lord turns your mourning into joy, you shall know why. You will then see that there was a need†† of all these things. It is to show you what is in your hearts, to mortify the spirit of self-righteousness, 'to teach you, that without him you can do nothing;'‡‡ to make you wise and experienced against Satan's devices; to give you a tender sympathy and fellow-feeling in the sufferings and infirmities of your brethren, and to enable you to encourage and comfort others§§ who shall be hereafter in your case, by relating what you have seen and known yourself in your various conflicts and strivings against sin. These are some of the reasons why the Lord suffers his dear children to groan, being burdened, and sometimes permits their enemies to gain a short advantage over them, that he

* Psal. cxviii. 15, 16.
§ Eph. i. 19.
** Psal. xlii. 9.
§§ 2 Cor. i. 4.
† Isa. xxxviii. 15.
‖ Psal. cxv. 1.
†† 1 Pet. i. 6.
‡ Psal. xliv. 6.
¶ John xiii. 7.
‡‡ John xv. 5.

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may humble and prove them,* in order to do them good in their latter end. And, O, with what wisdom is all this appointed! A little of it we may see at present, but we shall not have a complete view till we get safe home. Then to look back upon the way by which he led us through the wilderness will furnish matter for eternal praise.

Further, not only your mouths, but your lives shall praise him. What is the language of a believing heart, when the Lord pardons his sins, and binds up his wounds? It is this, 'Now, Lord, I am thine, thy vows are upon me, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Shall I continue in sin, because grace has abounded? God forbid! I am crucified with Christ, crucified to the world, and the world to me. The love of Christ constrains me. The time past is sufficient to have lived in vanity; henceforth I am the Lord's. He has bound me by his tender mercies, to present myself, body and soul, to his service. Here, O Lord, I offer my whole self, all that I am, and all that I have, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to thee. O let me never, never wander from thee again, but walk in the light, as thou art in the light, and have communion with thee here below, till thou shalt remove me out of the reach of sin and sorrow for ever.'†

If there are any here who have neither known the loving-kindness of the Lord, nor mourned under the sense of his displeasure, I am sure your lips are closed to this hour. And should you die thus incapable of praising the God who made you, and the grace which has brought the sound of the Gospel to your ears, it were better for you that you had never been born.‡ You have much reason to cry out, 'O Lord, open thou my lips.' Open my eyes to see my danger, to see the evil of my nature and life. Open my lips to confess my wickedness. Open my heart to receive thy word, that I likewise may bear a part in the praises thy people pay thee, and not perish (as without thy mercy I must do) with a lie in my right hand.§ Consider, the time is short;‖ death is *near*, and may be *sudden*. May the Lord enable you to consider the things belonging to your peace¶ before they are hid from your eyes!

And you, my friends, who at present enjoy the light of God's countenance, who know your sins are forgiven** for his name's sake, and have a happy freedom of access at the throne of grace,

* Deut. viii. 2—16.
† Psalm cxvi. 14. 16. and xxxi. 5. Rom. vi. 1. Gal. ii. 20. and vi. 14. Cor. v. 14. 1 Peter iv. 3. Rom. xii. 1. 1 John i. 7.
‡ Matt. xxvi. 24. § Isa. xliv. 20. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 29,
¶ Luke xix. 42. ** 1 John ii. 12.

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O be mindful of your privileges; beware of sin, beware of self, beware of Satan. Your enemy envies you your liberty; he watches you with subtilty and malice; he spreads snares for your feet; he desires to have advantage of you, 'that he may sift you as wheat.'* Therefore be upon your guard, be humble, make much of secret prayer, keep close to the Scriptures of God; by the words of his lips you shall be preserved from the paths of the destroyer.† Attend diligently upon the ordinances, and speak often one‡ to another, in love and faithfulness, of what the Lord has done and prepared for you, and of what§ manner of persons you ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness. Thus you shall be kept safe from evil. Jesus has prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.‖ Fix your eye¶ and your heart upon him, as he that must do all *for* you, all *in* you, all *by* you. And he has said, 'Yet a little while, and behold, I come quickly.'** Hold fast that which thou hast. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'††

SERMON XX.

OF THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

1 JOHN v. 19.

And we know that we are of God.

A WELL-GROUNDED and abiding persuasion, not only that the doctrines of the Gospel are true in themselves, but that we, through grace, are surely and unchangeably interested in them, is highly desirable. If we may be safe, we cannot be happy and comfortable without it, when once we have received an experimental knowledge of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the variety, subtilty, and force of Satan's temptations: and He who knows our frame and situation, has, in his holy word, made a full provision for us in this respect, and declared it to be his intention, that those who flee for refuge to the hope he has set

* Luke xxii. 31. † Psalm xvii. 4. ‡ Mal. iii. 16.
§ 2 Pet. iii. 11. ‖ Luke xxii. 32. ¶ Heb. xii. 2.
** Rev. iii. 11. †† Rev. ii. 10. xxii. 20.

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before them, might have strong consolation :* not be left at an uncertainty in a concern of the highest importance, but be rooted, grounded, established, and settled in the knowledge of his love, and be enabled to maintain it as an unshaken principle, through every change of dispensation and frame, 'that he who hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'†

This animating confidence, so well suited, and so necessary, to render the soul superior to all the trials of life, to inspire a noble disdain of the sinful pleasures and vain pursuits of the present evil world, and to engage the grateful exertion of every faculty and power in the service of God, is generally expressed by the word *Assurance*. But though the word is in frequent use, the thing itself has been, and still is, a subject of much dispute and controversy amongst professors of the Gospel. Many, not being conscious of such a cheering persuasion in themselves, and too hasty in supposing their attainments must be a standard to others, have ventured to deny the possibility of such an assurance, and treated every claim to it as visionary and enthusiastic. On the other hand, some have maintained the opposite extreme, and held assurance so essential to faith, that without it no person has a Scriptual warrant even to hope that a work of grace is begun in his heart. This sentiment, especially when asserted by persons of undoubted character for gifts, graces, and usefulness, has greatly startled and discouraged weak and feeble-minded souls, and been too often an occasion of adding to the distress of those who rather ought to have been comforted.

Great differences of judgment have likewise obtained concerning the means whereby, the manner in which, and the persons to whom, this assurance is communicated, supposing it attainable. It is not needful to insist on particulars. Perhaps the best way to prevent or remove mistakes, is to propose the truth simply; which so far as it takes place, will necessarily prevent the entertainment of error. I only mention in general, that there is a variety of sentiments on this point, and the most of them supported by respectable names, in order to caution you against paying too great a deference to human authority, and to urge you to praise God for your Bibles, and to be diligent in the perusal of them. If you search the Scriptures, and pray for the Spirit, you may arrive to a clear satisfaction for yourselves, no less than if all the learned were of one mind, and all of your side.

* Heb. vi. 18. † Phil. i. 6.

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My text assures us, that this assurance was possessed in the first ages of the church. There were some who could say, without hesitation, 'We know that we are of God;' and though they are an apostle's words, he uses them not exclusively as an apostle, but generally as a believer. The greatest part of the chapter, and indeed of the epistle, shows that he considers those to whom he was writing as partakers with him in the common privileges of Christians. So, likewise, St. Paul joins the believing Corinthians with himself, when he says, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'* And elsewhere he takes it for granted, that they (some of them at least) had this assurance, and presses them to a lively discharge of duty upon that consideration: 'Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'†

And we need make no scruple of affirming, from the fullest evidence, that this precious privilege was not confined, or designed by God to be so, to the first ages of the Gospel. There have been, in all periods of the church, where the word and ordinances of Christ have been faithfully administered, many who could say, 'We know that we are of God:' and we trust there are more than a few who can say so, and give a solid Scriptural evidence of the hope that is in them, even in this degenerate day. But because arguments from facts, which must depend upon persons' testimony in their own cases, are not allowed to be fully conclusive; and because the greater part of those who, we hope, sincerely love the Lord Jesus, live far below their just right and privilege, and are perplexed with doubts and fears which dishonour their profession, weaken their hands, and make their lives uncomfortable; I shall endeavour at this time to state and explain the nature of assurance, to prove that it is attainable, to point out the means by which we are to expect it, and to take notice of the hindrances which keep so many who are interested in the Gospel-salvation from enjoying their privilege, and make them unwilling or afraid to say, 'We know that we are of God.' What I have to offer on these particulars will occur under one or other of the following propositions.

I. Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith; but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard seed.‡ True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject it is universally of the same kind, and produces (according to its degree) the same uniform

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † 1 Cor. xv. 58. ‡ Rom. xiv. 1. Matt. xiv. 31. and xvii. 20.

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effects. It purifies the heart from the love and practice of sin; it works by love to the Lord Jesus Christ, his ordinances, ways, and people;* and it enables the professor to overcome the world, to stand fast against its frowns, and to resist the more pleasing, but not less dangerous influence of its smiles. Each of these effects is beyond the power, and contrary to the inclination, of the natural man. 'No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord,'† that is, can give him the honour due to his name, renounce every other hope of salvation, 'and count all things but loss and dung that he may win Christ, but by the Holy Ghost. Yet thus far many have undoubtedly attained, who have not assurance; but while they give sufficient evidence by their conduct that they have received precious faith in their hearts, they go mourning all the day long, and almost pass sentence against themselves as unbelievers. Now, what these mourners want, in order to their establishment and assurance, is not some new principle which they have not yet received, but only a stronger degree of that faith which they already possess. Some good writers speak of faith of reliance, faith of adherence, faith of assurance, direct and reflex acts of faith, &c. but these are not Scriptural modes of expression, nor do they appear to me to throw light upon the subject, but rather to increase the perplexity of plain people, who are apt to imagine these are so many different kinds of faith. The Scripture mentions only two kinds, 'a living and a dead faith.'‡ The true faith is faint and weak in its beginnings, like the life of a new-born infant; but it is growing up to maturity, and shall increase with the increase of God, 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'§ From hence it follows,

II. The grounds and principles of faith, and assurance are exactly the same. The first and lowest act of saving faith necessarily includes three things.

1. An apprehension of the sufficiency and authority of Christ to save. Men that live in their sins will rest upon a slender hope; but a conscience truly awakened must have sure grounds to go upon, and, without the discovery of such a Saviour as is revealed in the Gospel, would sink into despair. It is afraid of being deceived, and is so far enlightened that it cannot be easily imposed upon; a sense of the sinfulness of sin, an impression of the majesty of God, will not suffer it to rest in any thing short of a perfect atonement and a perfect righteousness. But when the eyes of the mind are opened, and Jesus is seen as revealed by the

* Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. 1 John v. 4. † 1 Cor. xii. 3. Phil. iii. 8.
‡ James ii. 17. § Ephes. iv. 13.

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word and Spirit of God, all scruples of this sort are silenced, and the soul perceives and feels that he is fully equal to the mighty undertaking.

2. An application to him. This of course follows a persuasion of his ability to save; for who will sit down and perish when there is a possibility of relief? There is, perhaps, a great questioning of Christ's willingness; but still, since there is a peradventure, a sense of distress on the one hand, and a view of his power and grace on the other, will extort a cry, 'Lord save me or I perish.'*

3. From hence there arises a hope in his mercy, which is fainter or stronger, according to the knowledge of Jesus is more or less distinct, and the surrender unto him more or less simple and unreserved; and therefore, in general, it is very faint at first; for the knowledge of Christ in a measure depends upon our knowledge of the Scriptures, which testify of him, and on the proofs we have had of his wisdom, grace, and love to ourselves; but the young convert, in whom the seed of faith is but lately sown, has but little acquaintance with the word: for he has but just begun to know the value of it; and he has but little experience; though his eyes are opened, his sight is not yet confirmed, nor his spiritual senses exercised.

Further, Though he is sincerely convinced of his need of a Saviour, there is still much of a legal bias, and a principle of self-righteousness in his heart, which, so far from being removed, is not yet discovered to himself; and while he thinks he looks to Christ alone, he is looking in himself for qualifications to recommend him, and afraid to draw near with confidence, because he cannot find them. These things discourage his hopes, and demonstrate his faith to be but weak.

But the strongest and most lively assurance that we can conceive attainable in the present life, is wrought and maintained by the very same principles which have so faint an influence in the infancy of faith. Let us hear the great champion St. Paul, in the close of an exemplary laborious life, giving an account to a dear and intimate friend of the hope that was in him. He had been honoured and distinguished for grace, gifts, and usefulness, in a peculiar manner; he had laboured more abundantly than all the apostles; he had fully preached the Gospel, and gathered churches throughout a very large part of the Roman empire;† his first call was extraordinary, by the Lord's appearing to him in glory; and some of his succeeding experiences had been no less singular, for he had been caught up into the third

* Matt. viii. 25. and xiv. 30. † 1 Cor. xv. 10. Rom. xv. 19.

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heavens ;* finally, his suffering for the Gospel had been as great and remarkable as his services. But when he expresses his assurance of support and salvation, he says not a syllable of these things, but rests the whole upon such points as are common to him with all believers ; 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'† We see there St. Paul's assurance was founded on, first, A knowledge of Jesus Christ, the object of his faith; secondly, A consciousness of transactions which had passed between him and his Saviour ; he had committed something to him, that was, his soul, with all its interests ; thirdly, A persuasion of his ability, willingness, and faithfulness, to secure and preserve what he had taken charge of. And these are the very same principles which are necessary to the first act of weak faith, only here they exert themselves with their proper power and efficacy. From hence,

III. Assurance is equally open to all believers. It is not the exclusive privilege of great services or sufferings: it is not confined to ministers, martyrs, or apostles ; but it is a prize set before all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, being no other than the growth and establishment of that faith which they have already received. The reason why all who believe are not happy in this assurance of hope, are to be sought, not in the will of God, who has made abundant provision for our comfort, but in the perverseness, ignorance, and misapprehensions of our own hearts, and from inattention to his revealed word. We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. It is not easy to enumerate the many ways in which our depravity works to keep this good thing from us. A few of the principal are these,

1. Insincerity. Where grace is really implanted by the Holy Spirit, it will surely prevail at length, and subdue the whole soul to the obedience of faith. But in too many there is for a long time not only great opposition from indwelling corruption, but a secret cleaving of the will to evil. A double-mindedness,‡ a kind of halting between two opinions ; so that while the desire and prayer of the soul seems expressed against all sin universally, there is still an allowed reserve of something inconsistent with light received. An habitual indulgence of known or suspected evil, or an habitual neglect of any known duty, will certainly prevent the growth of grace and consolation. For the Lord claims (what is his just due) the whole heart, and will not afford the strengthening light of his countenance while any idol is de-

*2 Cor. xii. 2. †2 Tim. i. 12. ‡James i. 8. 1 Kings xviii. 21. Prov. xxiii. 26. Psalm ix. 1.

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liberately set up in his presence. 'Then,' says David, (and not till then,) 'shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' And our Lord Jesus, when asked, 'How wilt thou manifest thyself unto us?' answered, 'if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'* Till the pride and naughtiness of our spirits are conquered, and we are made willing to give up all, to renounce whatever is contrary to his precepts, though pleasing as a right eye, and seemingly necessary as the right hand, it is in vain to expect a full and abiding assurance of his love.

2. Indolence. With respect to this valuable blessing, it may be often said, 'Ye receive not, because ye ask not.'† It is too common for those who were earnest in crying for mercy, while they thought themselves under the curse and power of the law, to grow slack and remiss in prayer soon after they obtain some hope of salvation from the Gospel; and particularly they do not 'give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,'‡ in the careful use of every means appointed for their establishment in the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore that word is fulfilled in them, 'The slothful soul desireth and hath nothing.'§ They go on for months or years in a complaining, unsettled state; and deservedly, because they are not earnest in seeking, asking, waiting, knocking at the gate of wisdom, and at the throne of grace, for that blessing which the Lord has promised to those who persevere in wrestling prayer, and will take no denial.

3. Misapprehensions. These arise from a neglect of examining the Scriptures, and an undue deference to the decisions of men. If assurance is supposed unattainable, it will consequently not be sought after. If it is expected as an instantaneous impression of the Spirit of God upon the mind, independent of his word, or to arise from some sudden powerful application of a particular text of Scripture, this persuasion will end in disappointment. For though it must be allowed that the Lord does at times favour his people with peculiar manifestations of his goodness, and perhaps, seal some promise especially suited to their present circumstances, with a remarkable sweetness and evidence upon their minds; yet these do rarely produce the assurance we are speaking of. These are but visits, seldom vouchsafed, and quickly suspended; and those who depend chiefly upon such impressions, instead of endeavouring to grow in the Scriptural knowledge of Christ, are generally as changeable in their hopes as in their frame. While their affections are thus engaged,

* Psalm cxix. 6. John xiv. 22, 23. † James iv. 2
‡ 2 Pet. i. 10. § Prov. xiii. 4.

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'their mountain stands strong, and they think they shall never be moved;'* but when the cause is withdrawn, the effect ceases, and they presently relapse into their former fears and inquietudes. Not to say, that expectations of this sort have a tendency to great inconveniences, and often open a door to the delusions of enthusiasm and dangerous impositions; for Satan, when permitted, knows how to transform himself into an angel of light.† If inherent sanctification, or a considerable increase of it, is considered as the proper ground of assurance, those who are most humble, sincere, and desirous of being conformed to the will of God, will be the most perplexed and discouraged in their search after it. For they, of all others, will be the least satisfied with themselves, and have the quickest sense of the innumerable defilements and defects which the Scripture assures us are inseparable from our best tempers and best actions. These mistakes, with others that might be mentioned, prevent many from seeking after assurance at all, and bewilder many more, by putting them upon a wrong pursuit? But what then is assurance; and how is it to be attained? I shall attempt an answer to these questions together in the next proposition.

IV. 'Assurance is the result of a competent spiritual knowledge of the person and work of Christ as revealed in the Gospel, and a consciousness of dependence on him and his work alone for salvation.' What I apprehend necessary to make my meaning plain, will occur from a brief explanation of the terms I have made use of in this description.

1. By the term 'spiritual knowledge,' I would ascribe it to the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, and distinguish it both from that speculative knowledge of divine things which natural men may acquire from books and human instruction, and likewise from that knowledge which a real believer may attain in the same way, beyond the limits of his present experience. Those who are favoured with great outward advantages, particularly the light of a clear Gospel-ministry, may very soon arrive to a notional apprehension of the most important truths; but with respect to the spiritual and abiding perception of those truths, there is no effectual teacher but the Spirit of God: and we often find, that what we think we have learned of men, we have occasion to be taught again by the Lord the Spirit; for our acquisitions fail us when we have most need of them, and will not stand the trial of an hour of temptation. But, so far as we have received our views of Jesus, his person, offices, mediation, and promises from him, we possess them, and should be able to defy

* Psalm xxx. 6, 7. † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

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an angel, if he was to propose to us any other doctrine than that which we have surely known and believed.*

2. I use the word 'competent,' because there is not, that I know of, any determinate standard where to fix. When our knowledge is so far increased as to overpower the objections arising from inward corruptions, defects of obedience, unbelieving fears, and the temptations of Satan; when we can cut them short with that question of the apostle, 'Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died,'† assurance follows of course. For I do not understand assurance, in the strictest sense, for the highest degree of certainty imaginable. Assurance itself is capable of increase; and will be so continually while there is any darkness in our understandings, or any remaining propensity to a self-righteous spirit. Then only will our assurance be perfect when we shall see Jesus as he is, and be completely freed from all our infirmities. For these, in whatever degree they prevail, will so far affect the strength and steadiness of our confidence in God.

3. This knowledge is wrought in us by the Spirit, through the medium of the written word. He teaches no unrevealed truths. We are not to expect that he will assure us as by a voice from heaven, or by a sudden impulse upon our hearts, that our names in particular are written in the book of life; but he opens our understandings to understand the Scripture,‡ to assent to and feel that we are such sinners as are there described, to see the dignity and sufficiency of Christ Jesus, as God-man, the Mediator, the suitableness of his offices, the value of his atonement and righteousness, and the harmony and glory of the divine attributes, in the adorable methods of redeeming love, which renders it just, righteous, and worthy of God to justify and save the believing sinner.§ He likewise gives us to understand the freedom and security of the Gospel promises, confirmed by the oath of God, and sealed with the blood of the Son. He shows us the establishment and immutability of the covenant of grace; convinces us that there is a fulness of wisdom, grace, life, and strength, treasured up in Christ, for the use and support of those who, in themselves, are poor, miserable, and helpless, and to be freely communicated in measure and season, as he sees necessary, to support, nourish, and revive the believing soul, and to lead him in the path of perseverance to everlasting life. Such a discovery of almighty power and unchangeable love, engaged for the infallible salvation of every believer, which they cannot lose by their own unworthiness, nor be deprived of by all the opposition which earth or

* Gal. i. 8. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ Luke xxiv. 45. § Rom. iii. 26.

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hell can raise against them,* produces a suitable assurance in the soul that receives it. And we can confidently say, 'We know we are of God,' when we can in this manner know in whom we have believed.

4. Such discoveries of the person and grace of Christ are connected with a heart-felt consciousness that the believer's dependence for all the great hopes and ends of salvation are fixed on him and his work alone. They draw forth acts of surrender and trust, and keep the mind from forming any vain scheme of hope or refuge, either in whole or in part, from any other quarter. Indeed, from the very first dawnings of faith, as I have observed, the soul is led to commit itself into the hands of Jesus; but while knowledge was weak, and the heart very imperfectly humbled, there was a secret, though unallowed dependence upon self, upon resolutions, frames, and duties. But as Jesus rises more glorious in the eye of faith, self is, in the same degree, depressed and renounced; and when we certainly see that there is no safety or stability but in his name, we as certainly feel that we expect them from him, and from him only. And the Holy Spirit assists here likewise, bears a comfortable witness with our spirits,† by drawing us to a throne of grace, pleading in us as a spirit of adoption, and prompting us to renew the renunciation of ourselves, 'and to glory in Jesus, as made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,'‡ from day to day. And from hence arises a solid, permanent assurance. The believer, though weak and unstable as water in himself, and though continually assaulted by a powerful combination against his peace, can look through all to Jesus, and say, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'§

What remains, then, but to animate and press every sincere believer to strive, in God's appointed way, for a comfortable assurance that they are accepted in the Beloved, passed from death unto life, and infallibly freed from all condemnation. Though this knowledge is not absolutely necessary to our safety, it is exceeding needful to make us unwearied, cheerful and evangelical, in a course of holy obedience, to the exertion of all our powers and faculties in the service of him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and to give us courage to endure and surmount the many difficulties and oppositions which we are sure to meet with in the course of our profession. Unbelief

* John x. 28, 29. † Rom. viii. 15, 16. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30. § Rom. viii. 38, 39.

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and distrust weaken our hands, and make our knees feeble.'* The more steadily we confide in God, the better we shall serve him; we shall be enabled to cast all our cares upon him, to rely on his promise to make our strength equal to our day; and having a well-grounded expectation of receiving the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls, we shall stand fast in the evil day, and say, 'None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy.'† I would only subjoin two cautions to those who are thus minded.

1. Remember that the progress of faith to assurance is gradual. Expect it not suddenly; but wait upon the Lord for it in the ways of his appointment. As it depends upon the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, let this engage you to constancy and earnestness in prayer; and as it arises from a knowledge of Jesus, be assiduous in searching the Scriptures, which testify of him. 'The blessing of the Lord and the hand of the diligent concur in the attainment of this benefit.'‡ If you persevere in this path, you will be helped forward by the experience of every day; and every dispensation of Providence, as well as every exercise and frame of mind you pass through, will be sanctified, to give you an increasing conviction that you are nothing, and that Jesus is all in all.

2. As you cannot see or maintain a sight of your interest in the covenant, but by the light of the Spirit, beware of grieving him.§ If you indulge a careless, trifling disposition, or venture upon known sin, you will find dark clouds raised between the Sun of Righteousness and your souls. Assurance is not so invariable but that it may be affected, weakened, and perhaps for a season quite suspended, by unfaithfulness and backsliding on our part. If you have a persuasion of your interest in the love of God, that remains always the same, though prayer is restrained, the ordinances slighted, and watchfulness intermitted; take heed lest this instead of assurance, should be vain confidence and presumption. The hope that maketh not ashamed, endears every precept and ordinance to the soul, weans the affection from low and trivial pursuits, and strengthens the exercise of every gracious principle.

As it is thus possible and desirable for a believer to 'know that he is of God;' so a concern for many here present will not suffer me to close, without desiring you to consider if you have not cause to conclude, from Scripture-testimony, that you are *not* of God. See the case determined by an apostle: 'Whosoever

* Heb. xii. 12. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Prov. x. 4. 22. § Ephes. iv. 30.

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doth not righteousness is not of God.'* And again, by another, 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'† Are not these decisions plain and absolute? If your love and dependence are not fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, if your tempers and practice are not governed by his commands, you are not of God. Whom then do you belong to? The whole world is divided between two masters, and ranged under opposite banners. A neutrality is impossible. If you are not of God, you belong at present to Satan; you are his captive;‡ he leads you blindfold; and he meditates your destruction, when you shall have worn out your lives in his miserable service. And will you continue fond of your bondage, and follow him like an ox to the slaughter? There is a redemption-price paid, there is an arm of power revealed, in favour of such helpless, perishing prisoners. Jesus, whom we preach, 'is able to take the prey out of the hand of the mighty, and to deliver the lawful captive.'§ The Lord help you to apply to him before iniquity is your ruin. O may he incline you to believe and be saved!‖ If you reject him, you seal yourself to an aggravated condemnation, and must perish without mercy; 'But if you hear his voice, and call upon his name, he is able to save to the uttermost, and to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.'¶

* 1 John iii. 10. † Rom. viii. 9. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 26.
§ Isa. xlix. 24. ‖ Acts xvi. 31. ¶ Heb. vii. 25. Acts iii. 20.

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A

REVIEW

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY,

SO FAR AS IT CONCERNS THE

PROGRESS, DECLENSION, AND REVIVALS

OF

EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE;

WITH

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE

SPIRIT AND METHODS BY WHICH VITAL AND EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION HAVE BEEN OPPOSED

IN ALL AGES OF THE CHURCH.

———Aliusque et Idem
Naceris———

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Gal. iv. 29.

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INTRODUCTION.

THOUGH the actions of mankind appear greatly diversified from the influence of particular circumstances, human nature has been always the same. The history of all ages and countries uniformly confirms the Scriptural doctrine, that man is a depraved and fallen creature, and that some selfish temper, ambition, avarice, pride, revenge, and the like, are, in effect, the main springs and motives of his conduct, unless so far, and in such instances, as they are corrected and subdued by Divine Grace.

Therefore, when St. Paul speaks of the most dreadful degree of impiety that can be imagined, *enmity against God*, he does not consider it as the fault of the particular time in which he lived, or impute it singly either to the idolatrous Heathens or the obstinate Jews, but he affirms universally, that *the carnal mind*, (το φρονημα της σαρκος) the wisdom, the most spiritual and discerning faculty of man, is enmity against God. Men differ considerably in capacity, rank, education, and attainments; they jar in sentiments and interests; they mutually revile, hate, and destroy one another; but in this point they all agree. Whether Greeks or Barbarians, wise or ignorant, bond or free, the bent and disposition of their minds, while unrenewed by grace, is black and implacable enmity against the blessed God.

To those who acknowledge the authority of Scripture, St. Paul's express assertion should be sufficient proof of this point, if we could produce no other; but, besides the many other passages in the book of God to the same effect, it may be demonstrated by the most obvious proofs, experience, and matter of fact. The history of the Old Testament from the death of Abel, the nature and grounds of the opposition which Jesus and his apostles met with, and the treatment of the most exemplary Christians that have lived in succeeding ages, are indisputable evidences of this offensive truth; for what can be stronger marks of enmity against God, than to despise his word, to scorn his favour, to oppose his will, to caress his enemies, and to insult and abuse his servants for no other offence than their attachment to his service?

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But when, from these premises, the apostle infers, 'So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' though the consequence is evident, it may seem at first view unnecessary; for can it be supposed that the carnal mind, which breathes a spirit of defiance and enmity against God, will have any desire or thought of pleasing him? Yet thus it is. The carnal mind is not only desperately wicked, but deeply deceitful; it deceives others, and often it deceives itself. As the magicians of Egypt, though enemies to Moses, attempted to counterfeit his miracles, and as Balaam could say, The Lord my God! though he was wickedly engaged against the Lord's people; so it has been usual with many who have hated and denied the power of godliness, to value themselves highly upon the form of it; and, while they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, they affect to be thought his best servants, and make the most confident claims to his favour.

The pure religion of Jesus cannot but be despised and rejected by the carnal mind: 'the natural man receiveth not the things of God,' they are beyond his sphere, he does not apprehend them, and therefore cannot approve them; nay, he is averse and unwilling to meddle with them, and therefore it is impossible he should understand them. But the fiercest opposition arises from the complication of presumption and hypocrisy we have spoken of; when men, destitute of the Spirit of God, from a vain conceit of their own wisdom and goodness, arrogate to themselves an authoritative decision in religious concerns, and would reduce the judgment and practice of others to their own corrupt standard.

Such was eminently the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, with unwearied malice, persecuted our Lord to the death of the cross; and he forewarned his disciples to expect the like treatment; he sent them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves, and assured them that their attachment to him would draw on them the hatred of mankind, so far as even to deprive them of the rights of civil society, and the pleasures of relative life. 'A man's foes shall be those of his own household;' his parents shall forget their affection, his children their duty, his servants their reverence, even the wife of his bosom shall despise him, when he boldly professes the Gospel; nay, the most amiable qualities, joined to the most endearing connexions, are not sufficient wholly to suppress the enmity which fills the hearts of the unregenerate against those in whom they discern the image of Christ; and that this enmity would sometimes assume a religious form, and, under that appearance, proceed to the

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greatest extremities, he informed them in another place, The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.

If a faith and practice agreeable to the New Testament were not always attended with a measure of this opposition, we should want one considerable evidence that the Gospel is true, and infidels would be possessed of one solid objection against it, namely, That our Lord was mistaken when he predicted the reception his doctrine would meet with. But the Scriptures cannot be broken: the word of Christ is fulfilled and fulfilling every day, and, especially, in this particular. Many, perhaps, will be ready to object here, and to maintain, that in our nation, and at this present time, the charge is invidious and false. It will be pleaded, that when Christianity had to struggle with Jews and Pagans it could not but be opposed; but that with us, under the guard of a national establishment, an opposition to Christianity, (unless by the feeble efforts of deists and libertines,) is impracticable and inconsistent by the very terms; and that, if the delusions of a few visionary enthusiasts are treated with that contempt and indignation which they justly deserve, this should not be styled an opposition to Christianity, but rather a warrantable concern for its vindication, especially as no coercive methods are used; for though some attempts have been made to restrain the leaders from poisoning the minds of the people, yet no person is injured, either in life or property, on account of his opinions, how extravagant soever.

To this extenuation it may be replied,

1. I do not assert that persecution and reproach must necessarily attend the *name* of a Christian, or that it is not possible to make a high profession of religion under that name, and at the same time preserve or acquire a large share of the honours, riches, and friendship of the world; but I maintain, with the apostle, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' The distinction he makes in these words is observable: So much godliness as may be professed without a peculiar relation to Jesus, the world will bear; sobriety and benevolence they will applaud: even prayers, fastings, and other external acts may be commended; but to live godly in Christ Jesus—so as to profess our whole dependence upon his free salvation, to seek all our strength from his grace, to do all expressly for his sake, and then to renounce all trust or confidence in what we have done, and to make mention of his righteousness only—this the world cannot bear; this will surely provoke the contempt or hatred of all who have not the same spirit, whether accounted Christians or Infidels, Papists or Protestants. That nothing less than

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what I have mentioned can be the import of living godly in Christ Jesus, I shall in due time prove by a cloud of witnesses.

2. I acknowledge, with thankfulness to God, and to those whom he has placed in just authority over us, that the interposition of stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death, in matters pertaining to conscience, has no longer place in our happy land.

——————jacet (semperque jaceat!)
Divini Imago Zelis et Pestis.

The spirit of persecution is repressed by the wisdom of our laws and the clemency of our princes; but we have no ground to believe it is extinct, or rather, we have sufficient evidence of the contrary. Not to mention some recent instances, in which power has been strained to its full extent, it is notorious that scorn, invective, and calumny, (which can act unrestrained by human laws,) are employed for the same ends and purposes, which, in other countries, are more speedily effected by anathemas and sanguinary edicts.

3. The opposition I am speaking of is not primarily between men and men, simply considered, but between the spirit of the world and the spirit that is of God, and therefore the manifestation of each will be in mutual proportion. The Lord Jesus himself sustained the fiercest contradiction of sinners, because his character was superlatively excellent; his apostles, though far inferior to their Lord, expressed so much of his temper and conduct, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in the next degree to him; as he was, so were they in the world. St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than his brethren, experienced a larger share of dishonour and ill-treatment. Though educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and no stranger to Grecian literature, when he showed himself determined to know nothing but Jesus, and to glory only in his cross, he was accounted, by Jew and Gentile, as the filth and off-scouring of all things: and thus it will hold universally. If, therefore, any who sincerely espouse the Gospel, meet with little disturbance or censure, it is not because the carnal mind is better reconciled to the truth than formerly in the apostles' days, but because our zeal, faith, and activity are so much inferior to theirs, and our conduct more conformable to the prevailing taste around us.

4. I confess, that, (as our Saviour has taught us to expect by the parable of the tares,) revivals of religion have been generally attended with some incidental offences, and counterfeited by many false appearances. It has been so in times past, it is so at present, and we are far from jus-

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tifying every thing, and in every degree, that the world is ready to condemn. However, we cannot but complain of a want of candour and ingenuousness in this respect also. Many who bring loud charges against what is irregular and blameable, are evidently glad of the opportunity to prejudice and alarm weak minds; they do not confine their reproof to what is erroneous and unscriptural, but endeavour, by ambiguous expressions, invidious names, and indiscriminate censures, to obscure the state of the question, and to brand error and truth with the same mark of infamy; they either cannot, or will not, distinguish between evangelical principles and the abuse of them; and when the distinction has been pointed out to them again and again, they refuse attention, and repeat the same stale misrepresentations which they know have been often refuted; they will not allow a grain for infirmity or inadvertence in those whom they oppose, while they demand the largest concessions for themselves and their adherents; they expect strict demonstrations from others, while, in their own cause, they are not ashamed to produce slanders for proofs, and jests for arguments; thus they triumph without a victory, and decide, *ex cathedrâ*, without so much as entering upon the merits of the cause. These methods, however successful, are not new inventions: by such arts and arms as these, Christianity was opposed from its first appearance; in this way, Lucian, Celsus, and Julian, employed their talents, and made themselves famous to future times.

I judge it, therefore, a seasonable undertaking, to attempt the apology of Evangelical Christianity, and to obviate the sophistry and calumnies which have been published against it; and this I hope to do, without engaging in any controversy, by a plain enumeration of facts. I propose to give a brief delineation of Ecclesiastical History from our Saviour's time; and, that the reader may know what to expect, I shall here subjoin the principal points I have in view.

1. I shall consider the genius and characteristic marks of the Gospel which Jesus taught, and show that, so long as this Gospel was maintained in its purity, it neither admitted nor found a neutrality, but that all who were not partakers of its benefits were exceedingly enraged against it. I shall make it appear that the same objections which have attended any reformations in later ages, were equally strong against Christianity, as taught by Christ and his first disciples; and that the offences and irregularities which have been known to attend a revival of evangelical doctrine in our time, were prevalent, to a considerable degree, under the preaching and inspection of the apostles.

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2. When I come to the lives and conduct of those called the *Fathers*, whose names are held in ignorant admiration by thousands, I shall prove, on the one hand, that the doctrines for which the Fathers were truly commendable, and by which many were enabled to seal their profession with their blood, were the same which are now branded with the epithets of *absurd* and *enthusiastic;* and, on the other hand, that the Fathers, however venerable, were men like ourselves, subject to mistakes and infirmities, and began very soon to depart from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel.

3. The progress of our history will manifest that the accession of wealth and power to the Christian profession proved greatly detrimental to the faith, discipline, and manners of the churches; so that, after the emperors publicly espoused the cause of Christ, the power and beauty of the Gospel was gradually eclipsed. Yet, in the most degenerate times, God had a spiritual people, who, though partaking in some degree of the general declension, retained so much of the primitive truth and practice as to incur the hatred and persecution of what is called the Christian world.

4. I shall treat of the means and instruments by which the Lord supported and revived his declining cause during several centuries. 1. In the valleys of Piedmont, Provence, &c. by Barengarius, Waldo, and others. 2. In England, by Wickliffe and his followers. 3. In Bohemia, by John Huss and Jerome of Prague. 4. In Germany, by Luther. Here I shall take occasion to observe, 1. That these successive reformations were all projected and executed, so far as God was pleased to give success, upon the same principles which are now so industriously exploded by many who would be thought champions of the Protestant faith. 2. That Luther's reformation, the most extensive and successful, and of which we have the best accounts, was soon followed by errors, heresies, and a numerous train of abominations (as had been the case with primitive Christianity) which the Romanists, in imitation of their Pagan predecessors, joyfully laid to the charge of the doctrine which Luther preached.

5. As it was not long before the reformed countries needed a second reformation, I shall give some account of the endeavours of many good men in Germany and other places in this view, their principles, success, and the treatment they met with from those who ought to have supported them; and then I shall briefly take notice of the similar occurrences in our country, from the end of Queen Mary's reign to the present time, to-

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gether with what has been most remarkable in the history of the Gospel in our American settlements.

6. I shall occasionally consider the character and conduct of those persons whom God has honoured with eminent usefulness in the different periods of his church, point out the defects in their plan, and the mistakes which, through infirmity, in some degree blemished their undertakings.

7. Finally, to make it evident that the spiritual worshippers of God have always been a sect every where spoken against, I shall enumerate some of the reproachful names that have been successively fixed on them, as the mark of general contempt and abhorrence, such as Patarienes, Lollards, Hugenots, Gospellers, Puritans, Pietists, &c.

These particulars will be illustrated in the course of our history, not exactly in the order here laid down, but as the series of the narration shall require or suggest. I shall not confine myself to a nice uniformity of method, or a dry detail of facts, but shall endeavour to illustrate and apply the several incidents to the use and edification of common readers, and with a view to my primary design, which is, (as I have already said,) to vindicate the doctrines of the Reformation, or, in other words, the main doctrines taught in the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, from those unjust and disingenuous invectives which are every day cast upon them, by not a few who owe all their distinction and authority to their having solemnly engaged to defend them.

Whoever considers the intricacy and variety of Ecclesiastical History, and that the best collections of that sort have swelled to a number of folios, will not expect to find every thing that might have deserved a place. The life of a man would hardly suffice to furnish a work of this sort in its just extent.

I must content myself with selecting a competent number of the most authentic and interesting topics, from the voluminous materials already published, but which, either from the size or scarceness of the books, or the languages in which they are written, are little more known to the generality of readers, than if they had never appeared in print.

I shall avoid, as far as possible, interfering in the controversies on church government, reserving to myself, and willingly leaving to others, the rights of private judgment, the just privilege of Christians, Protestants, and Britons.

It must be confessed that the bulk of Ecclesiastical History, as it is generally understood, is little more than a history of what the passions,

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prejudices, and interested views of men have prompted them to penetrate under the pretext and sanction of religion. Enough has been wrote in this way; curiosity, nay, malice itself, need desire no more. I propose to open a more pleasing prospect, to point out, by a long succession of witnesses, the native tendency and proper influence of the religion of Jesus; to produce the concurring suffrage of different ages, people, and languages, in favour of what the wisdom of the world rejects and reviles; to bring unanswerable proofs that the doctrine of grace is a doctrine according to godliness, that the constraining love of Christ is the most powerful motive to obedience, that it is the property of true faith to overcome the world, and that the true church and people of Christ have endured his cross in every age; the enemy has thrust sore at them that they might fall, but the Lord has been their refuge and support; they are placed upon a rock that cannot be shaken, they are kept [φρουρουμενοι] guarded and garrisoned by the power of God, and therefore the gates of hell have not, cannot, shall not prevail against them.

Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro.

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PREFACE.

A REVIEW of Ecclesiastical History, upon the plan proposed in the Introduction, is a subject of so much extent and difficulty, that, if I had not entered upon it before my admission into the ministry, I believe I should not have attempted it afterwards; for I soon found that the stated care of a large parish, and a due attention to the occasional occurrences of every day, would leave me but little leisure for the prosecution of my design. Upon these accounts it was wholly intermitted for several years; and my progress since I have resumed it, has been so slow, and my interruptions so many, that I had almost determined to content myself with publishing, in a single volume, a Review of the First Century. However, a desire of completing the work has prevailed, and I send this abroad with the title of a *first* volume, because I hope it will be followed by more, if the great God, who has the sovereign disposal of his creatures, shall be pleased to afford me a competent measure of health and ability for the service; but if he should see fit to appoint otherwise, I hope what I now offer to the public, (though but a part of my intended plan,) may suffice to show how little just ground there is for the insinuations and invectives, which have been so plentifully thrown out against the preachers and professors of those doctrines, which were once esteemed the life and glory of the Protestant name.

I cannot expect that all my readers will be pleased with the application I have made of New Testament facts to the state of religion in our times; but as I am not conscious that I have written a single line with a view to provoke or inflame, I have only to entreat a candid perusal, and to commit the issue to Him whom I desire to serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son. I have long thought an attempt of this kind would be seasonable; I pray that it may be useful. If it should in any measure contribute to remove or soften the prejudice by which great numbers are prevented from attending to the one thing needful, and induced to

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speak evil of that which they know not, I shall account my time well employed. I hope I have been influenced by no motives but the love of truth, and a desire to promote the welfare of immortal souls, and therefore have expressed my sentiments with plainness, and freedom, as I think it behooves every one to do, when treating on subjects in which the truths of God and the souls of men are immediately concerned.

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, November, 1769.

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BOOK I.

OF THE FIRST PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

The wisdom and goodness of God conspicuous in the period assigned for Christ's appearance: illustrated by a summary view of the state of mankind before and at the time of his birth.

When the first man had fallen from the happiness and perfection of his creation, had rendered himself corrupt and miserable, and was only capable of transmitting depravity and misery to his posterity; the goodness of God immediately revealed a remedy adequate to his distressed situation. The Lord Jesus was promised under the character *of the seed of the woman*, as the great deliverer who should repair the breach of sin, and retrieve the ruin of human nature. From that hour he became the object of faith, and the author of salvation, to every soul that aspired to communion with God, and earnestly sought deliverance from guilt and wrath. This discovery of a Saviour was, in the first ages, veiled under types and shadows: and, like the advancing day, became brighter, and brighter, as the time of his manifestation drew near; but it was always sufficient to sustain the hopes and to purify the hearts of the true worshippers of God. That the patriarchs and prophets of old were in this sense *Christians*, that is to say, that their joy and trust centred in the promised Messiah, and that the faith, whereby they overcame the world, was the same faith in the same Lord with ours, is unanswerably proved by St. Paul, in several passages:* particularly in Heb. xi. where he at large insists on the characters of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, to illustrate this very point.

At length, in the fulness of time,† (as the apostle speaks,) the time marked out by the ancient prophecies, the time to which all the previous dispensations of Divine Providence had express reference and subordination, and which was peculiarly suited to place the manifold wisdom of God and the truths of divine revelation in the clearest light; the long-expected Messiah appeared, as the

* Rom. iv. Gal. iii. 16, 17. † Gal. iv. 4.

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surety and Saviour of sinners, to accomplish the great work of redemption. For these purposes he was born of a virgin, of the family of David, at the town of Bethlehem, as the prophets had foretold. This great event took place in the 27th year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar, (computing from the battle of Actium;*) and according to the most received authorities, almost 1920 years from the calling of Abraham, and about 4000 from the creation.

The pride and vanity of man, which prompt him to cavil with his Maker, and to dispute when he ought to obey, have often objected to the expedience and propriety of this appointment. It has been asked, if Christ's appearance was so absolutely necessary, why was it so long deferred? or, if mankind could do without him for so many thousand years, why not longer, or for ever? In attempting a solution of this difficulty, some well meaning persons, from too earnest a desire to render the counsels of God more acceptable to the narrow apprehensions of unsanctified reason, have given up the ground they ought to have maintained, and made such concessions as, (if extended to their just consequence,) would amount to all that the most hardened infidel can desire. The most direct and proper answer is suggested by St. Paul on a similar occasion,† 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' That the will and wisdom of the Creator should direct and limit the inquiries of his rational creatures, is a principle highly consonant to right reason itself. And there can hardly be a stronger proof of human depravity, than that this argument is so generally esteemed inconclusive. But waving this, a sufficient answer may be made from the premises already advanced.

God was not a debtor to sinful men. He might have left them all to perish, (as he left the sinning angels,) without the least impeachment of his goodness. But his mercy interposed, and he spared not his own Son, that sinners might be saved in a way consistent with his perfections. But though, in *compassion to us*, he provided the means of salvation; we cannot wonder, that, in *justice to himself*, he laid the plan in such a manner as might most clearly illustrate the riches of his own grace, and most effectually

*Bossuet Univ. Hist. Prideaux Connec.

† Rom. ix. 20. It is observable in this passage, that the apostle foresees and states the great objection which would be made to his doctrine; and does not attempt to answer it any further, than by referring all to the will of him who formed the whole mass, and has a right to dispose of it. Had succeeding writers and teachers imitated his example, declared the plain truth in plain words, and avoided vain and endless reasonings, how many offences would have been prevented!

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humble and silence the pardoned offenders; to prevent their boasting and trusting in themselves, and to give them the most affecting views of his unmerited goodness. We may, therefore, humbly conceive one reason why Christ was no sooner manifested in the flesh, to have been, that the nature, effects, and inveteracy of sin might be more evidently known; and the insufficiency of every other means of relief demonstrated, by the universal experience of many ages.

What is the history of mankind, but a diffusive exemplification of the Scripture doctrines, concerning the dreadful nature and effects of sin, and the desperate wickedness of the heart of man! We are accustomed, from our infancy, to call evil good, and good evil. We acquire an early prejudice in favour of heroes, conquerors, and philosophers. But if we consider the facts recorded in the annals of antiquity, divested of the false glare and studied ornaments with which the vanity of writers has disguised them, they will afford but a dark and melancholy review. The spirit of the first-born, Cain, appears to have influenced the whole human race: the peace of nations, cities, and families, has been continually disturbed by the bitter effects of ambition, avarice, revenge, cruelty, and lust. The general knowledge of God was soon lost out of the world; and, when *his* fear was set aside, the restraints, dictated by the interests of civil society, were always too weak to prevent the most horrid evils. In a word, the character of all ages and countries before the coming of Christ, (a few excepted, where the light of revelation was afforded,) is strongly, though briefly drawn by St. Paul.* 'Foolish' and infatuated to the highest degree, 'disobedient' to the plainest dictates of nature, reason, and conscience, 'enslaved† to divers' dishonourable 'lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful' and abominable in themselves, and incessantly 'hating' and worrying 'one another.'

It would be more easy than pleasant to make out this charge by a long induction of particulars. And, without having recourse to the most savage and uncultivated, the proof might be rested on the character of the two most celebrated and civilized nations, and at the time of their greatest refinement, the Greeks and the Romans. St. Paul has given us the result of their boasted improvements‡ in arts and sciences, in war and commerce, in philosophy

* Titus iii. 3.

† 'Enslaved.' So the original term may be emphatically rendered; at the control of various and opposite passions, hurried about by them all in their turns, and incapable of resisting or refusing the motions of any.

‡ Rom. 1. from v. 21. to the end. An affecting comment on this passage might be collected from Horace, Juvenal, Sallust, and Suetonius.

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and literature; and he says no more than is abundantly confirmed by their own poets and historians. Notwithstanding the marks and fruits of fine taste and exalted genius which were found amongst them, they were habitually abandoned to the grossest vices. Devoted to the most stupid 'idolatry,' they worshipped the works of their own hands; nay, erected altars to their follies and passions. Their moral characters were answerable to their principles. 'Without natural affection,' they frequently exposed their helpless infants to perish. They burned with 'lusts' not to be named without horror; and this not the meaner sort only, or in secret, but some of their finest spirits and most admired writers* were sunk so low as to glory in their shame, and openly avow themselves the disgrace of humanity. In their public concerns, (notwithstanding their specious pretences,) they were 'covenant breakers, implacable, unmerciful,' and 'unjust.' Guilty of the severest oppression, while they boasted highly of equity and moderation;† as was particularly manifested on the destruction of Carthage and Corinth: two memorable instances of the spirit of a government, so undeservedly admired in after-times. And as the Roman power, so the Grecian eloquence was perverted to the worst purposes; to palliate crimes, to consecrate folly, and to recommend falsehood under the guise and semblance of truth.

Such was the character of the people, reputed the wisest and the best of the heathens; and particularly so at the birth of Christ, when the Roman empire was at the summit of authority and splendour. A long experience had shown the general depravity to be not only inveterate, but incurable. For, during several preceding ages, a reformation had been desired and attempted. The principal leaders in this commendable design were called philosophers, and many of their writings are still extant. It must be acknowledged that some of them had a faint view of several important truths; but as they neither knew the cause and extent of the disorder, nor the only effectual remedy, they met with little success. Their schemes were various, inconsistent, and even opposite; and each party more successful in opposing the fallacy of other sects than in maintaining their own. Those who came nearest the truth, and were in earnest to promote it, were very

* See Virgil. Eclog. ii.

† See Acts xxvii. 42. The soldiers would have killed all the prisoners, right or wrong, rather than one of them should have a possibility of escaping: and in this, without doubt, they consulted their own safety, and the spirit of their laws. Why, then, were the Romans so much admired? Could there be a greater proof of cruelty and injustice found amongst the most barbarous nations, than to leave prisoners, who possibly might be innocent, exposed to the wanton caprice of their keepers?

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few. Even these were ignorant of some things absolutely necessary to the attainment of the desired end. The best of them were restrained by the fear of men, and a regard to established customs. What they could and did propound, they had not sufficient authority or influence to impress upon the consciences of men. And if, in a few instances, they seemed to succeed, the advantage was only imaginary. Where they prevailed on any to relinquish intemperance, they made them full amends by gratifying their pride. The business passed from hand to hand, from sect to sect, but all to no purpose. After innumerable disputations, and volumes concerning the supreme good, the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, and other high sounding topics, they left matters as bad or worse than they found them. They could not effectually inculcate their doctrine upon a single village or family. Nay, they were but half persuaded themselves, and could not act up to their own principles when they most needed their support.*

A still more affecting view of the degeneracy of human nature we have in the history of the Israelites, whom God was pleased to set apart from the rest of mankind, for several important purposes. He revealed himself to this people when they were groaning under a heavy bondage in Egypt, from which they had neither spirit nor power to deliver themselves. He freed them from their captivity by a series of illustrious miracles. He led them through the sea and the desert. He honoured them with the symbols of his immediate presence; was a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them. He spoke to them with an audible voice, and fed them with manna from heaven. He put them in possession of a good land, and fought against all their enemies. Might it not have been expected that a people so highly favoured and honoured should have been obedient and thankful? Some of them were so. His grace always preserved a spiritual people amongst them whose faith in the Messiah taught them the true meaning of the Levitical law, and inspired them with zeal and sincerity in the service of God. But the bulk of the nation was always refractory and disobedient. While in the wilderness, they murmured against the Lord upon every new difficulty. Within a few days after the law had been delivered in flames and thunder from the top of Sinai, they formed a molten calf to worship, and would have made a captain who might lead them back into Egypt. They despised the good land; therefore their carcass-

* Witness the prevarication of Socrates, and the irresolution of Cicero, towards the close of their lives.

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es* fell in the wilderness. Their posterity retained the same spirit. They learned the ways of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before them. They adopted every idolatrous practice, they transgressed every divine command. During a long succession of warnings, chastisements, and deliverances, they became worse and worse; so that, in Jeremiah's time, they equalled, or exceeded the heathens around them in ignorance and wickedness. They mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets till his wrath arose against them, and there was no remedy. At length their land was laid waste, Jerusalem burnt, the greater part of the people destroyed, and the remainder carried captives into Chaldea.

Upon their return from captivity, they seemed, for a little while, to retain a sense of their duty, and of the judgments they had suffered. But all was soon forgot. Their wickedness now put on a new form, and discovered the evil of the heart of man in a new point of view. They were no longer prone to idolatry. They avoided the most distant appearance of it with scrupulous exactness; and professed the highest attachment to God. They boasted themselves in his law; and, from a presumption that they were his peculiar people, they despised and hated the rest of mankind. It is not our present concern closely to follow their history. Let it suffice to say, that, by substituting a regard to the letter of the law, in the place of spiritual obedience, and by presuming to multiply their own inventions and traditions,† and to hold them no less binding than the positive commands of God; they, by degrees, attained to a pitch of impiety unknown to former times; and which was so much the more offensive and abominable, as it was covered with the mask of religion, and accompanied with a claim to superior sanctity.

* 1 Cor. x. 5. They were overthrown in the wilderness. Κατεστρωθησαν, they fell in heaps, like grass before the scythe; and this, after all the great things they had seen and been partakers of. Of the many hundred thousands who were above twenty years old when they were delivered from Egypt, only two persons were spared to enter the promised land. A striking admonition to us, not to rest in the participation of external privileges of any kind. For these people had seen the Lord's wonders at the Red Sea, had rejoiced in the destruction of the Egyptians, and been fed with manna from heaven.

† See one instance, Matt. xv. 5. The expression is rather obscure; but the sense is, 'What you might expect from me for your support, I have put out of my own power; it is devoted to the service of God and the temple.' And teachers allowed this to be a legal exemption. Any man who would pay handsomely to the priests and the temple, might treat his parents as he pleased. Thus they set aside the express command of God, by their own authority, and for their own advantage. The same dispensing, commuting, engrossing spirit has too often appeared in the Christian church.

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Pride, hypocrisy, and interest, divided them into sects; and the contests of each party for superiority, threw the state into frequent commotions. Their intrigues at length brought upon them the Roman power. The city was taken by Pompey; and, though they afterwards retained a shadow of liberty, their government was determined, from that time, by the will of the conquerors. At length Herod, a foreigner, obtained it. In his reign Christ was born.

Thus the state of mankind, before the coming of Christ, proved, with the fullest evidence, the necessity of his interposition. And, in the mean time, the world had not been left utterly helpless and hopeless. His future advent had been revealed from the beginning; and, by faith in that revelation, a remnant had subsisted in every age, who had triumphed over the general evil, and maintained the cause of God and truth. It was not necessary to the salvation of *these* that he should have been manifested sooner; for they beheld his day afar off, and rejoiced in his name. With respect to *others*, destitute of divine faith, his incarnation would have had the same effect at any period, as it had on multitudes who actually saw him in the flesh, but offended with the meanness of his circumstances, and the great honours he vindicated to himself, rejected him with disdain.

But further. The late appearance of Christ in the world gave room for the full accomplishment of the prophecies concerning him, which had been repeated at different times, with increasing clearness and precision; insomuch, that the time, place, and every circumstance of his birth, life, and death, had been distinctly foretold. Thus the truth and authority of the Old Testament were confirmed; and the wisdom, power, and providence of God, over-ruling and directing the contingencies of human affairs to produce this grand event in its determinate period, were displayed to the highest advantage. And as the state of the *moral* world made his presence highly necessary, so God, in due time, disposed the *political* state of mankind in such a manner as to prepare the way for a speedy and general publication of the Gospel through the world.

It would be pleasing to consider how the rise, and fall, and change of empires were made successively subservient to introduce the kingdom of Jesus. But this would lead me beyond my present bounds. I can only just hint at two or three events which had a more general influence. The first is, the rapid progress of Alexander, whose extensive conquests, divided amongst his successors, laid the foundation of four powerful monarchies, and opened an intercourse between countries till then unknown to each other. By this means the Greek tongue became familiar and

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common to many nations; and soon after the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into that language, and the prophecies concerning the Messiah were laid open to the Gentiles. To this may be added the several dispersions of the Jews; who, upon various occasions, had been settled in almost every considerable city under the heathen governments. By their traditions and prophecies, imperfectly understood, a general expectation had been raised of some extraordinary deliverer, who would shortly appear. Lastly, by the growth of the Roman empire, many nations and people, who were before acquainted by means of one common language, became more closely united under one dominion. Every province had a necessary connexion with Rome; and Rome was the centre and resort of the greatest part of the then habitable world.

As to the Jews, many things concurred to animate their wishes and expectations of the Messiah's approach. The prophecies were in their hands. Many of their wise men were apprised that the term of seventy weeks, spoken of by Daniel, was drawing to a period. The sceptre seemed departing from Judah; they groaned under a foreign yoke, from which, they vainly imagined the Messiah would set them free, and give them, in their turn, a temporal dominion over the nations of the earth. Though this mistake prompted them to reject Christ when he preached a deliverance unsuitable to their worldly notions, yet it made them solicitous and eager for the appearance of the person on whom their hopes were fixed. A few amongst them, however, better instructed in the true meaning of the prophecies, were secretly waiting, in the exercises of faith and prayer, for the consolation of Israel.*

From this general view of the moral and political state of mankind, and the leading designs of divine revelation and providence, previous to the birth of Christ, we may conclude, that the time fixed on from before the foundation of the world for his actual exhibition amongst men was not an arbitrary, but a wise and gracious appointment; a determination admirably suited to place the most important truths in the strongest light. In this way, the depravity, misery, and helplessness of man, the mercy of God, and the truth of the Scriptures, were unquestionably proved to all succeeding times. The necessity of a Saviour was felt and acknowledged; and the suitableness, all-sufficiency, and condescension of Jesus, when he undertook and accomplished the great designs in which his love engaged him, were more strongly illustrated by the preceding contrast. He knew the whole human race were sinners, rebels, enemies against God; he knew the

* Luke ii. 25.

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terms, the price of our redemption; that he must obey, suffer, weep and die. Yet he came. He emptied himself of his glory and honour, and took on him the form of a servant, to bring the glad tidings of salvation to men. In effect, the gospel of Christ soon appeared to be the great *desideratum*, and completely redressed the evils which philosophy had given up as desperate. The genius and characteristic marks of this Gospel will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

The Character and Genius of the Gospel, as taught and exemplified by Christ.

A SUCCINCT history of the life of our Lord and Saviour is no part of our plan. This the inspired evangelists have performed with the highest advantage and authority; and their writings (through the mercy of God) are generally known and read in our own tongue. It will be sufficient for me to select a few passages from them, to explain and confirm the several points I have proposed to treat of in this book, as principles whereon to ground our observations on the spirit and conduct of after-times.

At present I propose to state the true character and genius of his doctrine. This may seem a digression from my main design; but, as I shall often have occasion to speak of the Gospel, and the opposition it has met with, it will not be improper, in the first place, to exhibit a general idea of what we mean by the Gospel; especially as the professed followers of Christ have been, and still are, not a little divided upon the point.

We may describe the Gospel to be—*A divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ, discovering the misery of fallen man by sin, and the means of his complete recovery by the free grace of God, through faith, unto holiness and happiness.* The explication and proof of these particulars from our Lord's express declarations, and the tenour of his conduct, will sufficiently point out the principal marks and characters of his Gospel. But before we enter upon this, two things may be premised.

1. Though I confine myself to the writings of the evangelists, in this disquisition, yet it should be remembered, that whilst our Lord was visibly conversant with men, he did not ordinarily discover the whole system of his doctrine in express terms. He spoke to the multitude, for the most part, in parables,* and was not forward to proclaim himself the Messiah upon every† occa-

* Matt. xiii. 10, 11. † Matt. xvi. 20.

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sion. And, even in his more intimate discourses with his disciples, he taught them with a wise and gracious accommodation to their circumstances and weakness.* The full explanation of many things, he referred to the time when, having accomplished his wish, and returned victorious and triumphant into heaven, he should send down, according to his promise, the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and comfort his people. Then,† and not before, they fully understood the meaning of all they had seen and heard while he was with them.

2. The doctrine of the Gospel is not like a mathematical problem, which conveys precisely the same degree of truth and certainty to every one that understands the terms. If so, all believers would be equally enlightened, who enjoy the common privilege of the written word. But there is, in fact, an amazing variety in this respect. Where this doctrine is truly understood, though, in the lowest degree, it inspires the soul with a supreme love to Jesus, and a trust in him for salvation. And those who understand it best have not yet received all the evidence, comfort, and influence from it which it is capable of affording. The riches of grace and wisdom in this dispensation are unsearchable‡ and immense, imparted in different measures, and increased from time to time, according to the good pleasure§ of the Spirit of God, who furnishes his people with light and strength proportioned to their exigencies, situation, and the services or trials he calls them to; not without respect to the degree of their diligence, obedience, and simplicity in waiting upon him. For these reasons, it is not to be expected that every one who serves God with his spirit in the Gospel of his Son, should have exactly the same views of this sublime subject. Neither do I presume to think myself capable of displaying it in its full light and beauty. I desire, therefore, to write with candour, and entreat a candid perusal, as conscious of my infirmities, and the imperfections necessarily attending the human mind in this present state of things. Yet I am not afraid to express my just confidence, that I shall advance no principle, as a part of the Gospel doctrine, which does not assuredly belong to it.

* John xvi. 12. 25. Our Lord taught his disciples gradually; their knowledge advanced as the light, or, (according to his own beautiful simile,) first the blade, then the ear; first green corn, then fully ripe. He considered their difficulties, he made allowance for their infirmities. It is to be wished his example was followed by all who teach in his name. Some are so hasty, they expect to teach to others, in one discourse or interview, all that they have attained themselves by the study and experience of many years.

† Mark ix. 10. John ii. 22. ‡ Ephes. iii. 8. § 1 Cor. xii. 11.

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I now proceed to explain and confirm the definition I have given of the Gospel.

1. It is a divine revelation, a discovery of truths which, though of the highest moment, could have been known no other way. That God will forgive sin, is beyond the power of unassisted reason to prove. The prevailing custom of sacrifices is, indeed, founded upon such a hope; but this practice was, without doubt, derived from revelation, for reason could not have suggested such an expedient. And those among the heathens, whether priests or philosophers, who spoke of forgiveness of sin, knew but little what sin was. Revelation was needful to discover sin in its true nature and demerit: and where this is known, the awakened and wounded conscience is not easily persuaded that a just and holy God will pardon iniquity. So, likewise, the immortality of the soul, after all the fine things said upon the subject, remained a problematical point among the heathen. Their best arguments, though conclusive to us, were not so to themselves.* When they laid aside their books, and returned to the common affairs of life, they forgot the force of their own demonstrations. But the Gospel of Christ is an express, complete, and infallible revelation, as he himself often assured his hearers.†

And as the subject-matter of the Gospel contained in the New Testament is a revelation from God, so it is only by a divine revelation that what is there read or heard can be truly understood. This is an offensive assertion, but must not be omitted, when the question is concerning the marks and characters of Christ's doctrine. Thus when Peter made that noble confession,‡ 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' our Lord answers, 'Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' If Peter could read, and had the Scriptures to peruse, these were advantages derived from flesh and blood, from his birth, parents, and teachers; advantages which the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord's most inveterate enemies, enjoyed in common with him. The difference lay in a revelation of the truth to his heart. As it is said in another place,§ 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.'

* Cicero frankly confesses this. Nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabitur. Tusc. Quest. Lib. i.

† John vii. 16. viii. 28. ‡ Matt. xvi. 16, 17.

§ That babes should be admitted to this knowledge, and express a certainty, where the wise are all perplexity and darkness, is extremely mortifying to human pride. But are not these the words of Christ? How arrogant, how dangerous must it be to be displeased with that dispensation at which he rejoiced!

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2. It is a revelation, in the person of Jesus Christ. As a revelation, it stands distinguished from all false religions; and as revealed in the person of Jesus, it is distinguished from all former dispensations of the true God, who, in time past, had spoken by the prophets, but was pleased, in those last days, to speak unto us by his Son. The law was given by Moses, both to enforce the necessity of a universal sinless obedience, and to point out the *efficacy* of a better mediator; but grace and truth, *grace answerable to the sinner's guilt and misery*, and the truth and full accomplishment of all its typical services, came by Jesus Christ. All the grand peculiarities of the Gospel centre in this point, the constitution of the person of Christ.* In the knowledge of him standeth our eternal life. And though our Lord, on some occasions, refused to answer the captious questions of his enemies, and expressed himself so as to leave his hearers in suspense; yet, at other times, he clearly asserted his own just rights and honours, and proposed himself as the supreme object of love, trust, and worship, the fountain of grace and power, the resurrection, life, and happiness of all believers.

That he vindicated to himself those characters and prerogatives which incommunicably belong to God, is evident from the texts referred to. He was a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart.† He forgave sins. He adopted the style of supreme majesty.‡ His wonderful works were proof of an almighty power. He restored sight, health, and life, with a word.§ He controlled the elements,‖ and showed himself¶ Lord of quick and dead, angels, and devils; and both his enemies and his friends understood his claim. The Jews attempted to stone him** for making himself equal to God, and he received from Thomas the most express and solemn ascription of Deity that can be offered from a creature to his Creator.††

Yet all this glory was veiled. The word was made flesh; he assumed the human nature, and shared in all its infirmities, sin excepted. He was born of a woman, he passed through the states of infancy, childhood, and youth, and gradually increased

* Col. ii. 3, 9. John xvii. 3. † Matt. ix. 2, 3.

‡ John viii. 38. John xiv. 9. 'He that hath seen me hath seen my Father.' Which of all the creatures of God dare use these words! God, in the strict sense, is invisible and inaccessible: but he communicates with his creatures through Christ his Son, without whom he cannot be seen or known at all. We cannot enjoy any spiritual, clear, and comfortable views of God, unless our thoughts fix upon the man Christ Jesus; he is the door and the veil to the holy of holies, and there is no coming to the Father by any other way.

§ Matt. viii. 3. ix. 30. John iv. 53. ‖ Matt. xiv. 25. Mark iv. 39.

¶ John xi. 25, 44. Luke iv. 34. Matt. iv. 11. Luke x. 17.

** John v. 18. x. 33. †† John xx. 28.

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in wisdom and stature.* He was often, yea, always afflicted. He endured† hunger, thirst, and weariness. He‡ sighed, he wept, he groaned, he bled, he died; but amidst all, he was spotless and undefiled. He§ repelled the temptations of Satan, he appealed to his most watchful enemies for his integrity, he rendered universal, unceasing obedience to the will of God, and completely fulfilled the whole law. In him the perfection of wisdom and goodness shined forth. He burned with love to God, with compassion to men; a compassion which he freely extended to the most necessitous and most unworthy. He returned good for evil, wept‖ for his enemies, prayed for his murderers. Such was his character, a divine person in the human nature,¶ God manifest in the flesh. And from this union, all he did, and all he said, derived a dignity, authority, and efficacy which rendered him every way worthy to be the Teacher, Exemplar, Lord, and Saviour of mankind.

3. In the person and sufferings of Christ there is at once a discovery of the misery of fallen man, and the means of his complete recovery. It has already been observed, that the full explication of these truths was deferred till after his resurrection; and the subsequent writings of his apostles are useful, to give us a complete view of the cause, design, and benefits of his passion. At present we confine ourselves to his own words. He frequently** taught the necessity and certainty of his sufferings; he spoke of them as the great design of his incarnation, that it was by this means he should draw†† all unto himself, that he was on this account, especially, the object of his Father's complacency, because he voluntarily substituted himself to die for his people. He enforced the necessity‡‡ of believing on him in this view; and applied to himself the prophecies of the Old Testament,§§ which speak to the same purpose. Isaiah had foretold that the Lord would lay upon him the iniquities of us all; that he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we should be healed. Here, then, we see the manifold wisdom of God. His inexpressible love to us commended; his mercy exalted in the salvation of sinners; his truth and justice vindicated, in the full satisfaction for sin exacted from the surety; his glorious holiness and opposition to all evil, and his invariable faithfulnes to his threatenings and his promises. Considered in this light, our Saviour's passion is the most momentous, instructive, and com-

* Luke ii. 52. † Mark xi. 12. John iv. 6, 7. ‡ Mark vii. 34. John xi. 35, 38. Luke xxii. 44. § Matt. iv. 1. 10. John viii. 46. xiv. 30. xvii. 4. ‖ Luke xix. 41. xxiii. 34. ¶ 1 Tim. iii. 16. ** Matt. xvi. 21. xx. 28. †† John xii. 32. x. 17. ‡‡ John iii. 14—18. §§ Luke xxiv. 25—27. Isa. liii.

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fortable theme that can affect the heart of man; but, if his substitution and proper atonement are denied, the whole is unintelligible. We can assign no sufficient reason why a person of his excellence was abandoned to such miseries and indignities; nor can we account for that agony and distress which seized him at the prospect of what was coming upon him. It would be highly injurious to his character to suppose he was thus terrified by the apprehension of death or bodily pain, when so many frail and sinful men have encountered death, armed with the severest tortures, with far less emotion.

Here, as in a glass, we see the evil of sin, and the misery of man. The greatness of the disorder may be rationally inferred from the greatness of the means necessary to remove it. Would we learn the depth of the fall of man, let us consider the depth of the humiliation of Jesus to restore him. Behold the Beloved of God, perfectly spotless and holy, yet made an example of the severest vengeance; prostrate and agonizing in the garden; enduring the vilest insults from wicked men; torn with whips, and nails, and thorns; suspended, naked, wounded, and bleeding upon the cross, and there heavily complaining that God had, for a season, forsaken him. Sin was the cause of all his anguish. He stood in the place of sinners, and, therefore, was not spared. Not any, or all, the evils which the world has known, afford such proof of the dreadful effects and detestable nature of sin, as the knowledge of Christ crucified. Sin had rendered the case of mankind so utterly desperate, that nothing less than the blood and death of Jesus could retrieve it. If any other expedient could have sufficed, his prayer, that the bitter cup might pass from him, would have been answered. But what his enemies intended as the keenest reproach, his redeemed people will for ever repeat as the expression of his highest praise,* 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' Justice would admit no inferior atonement, love would not give up the cause of fallen, ruined man. Being, therefore, determined to save others, he could not, consistently with this gracious design and undertaking, deliver himself.

Again, the means and certainty of a salvation proportioned to the guilt and misery of sinners, and a happiness answerable to the utmost capacity of the soul of man, are revealed in the same astonishing dispensation of divine love. When Jesus was baptized he was pointed out by a voice from heaven;† 'This is my beloved Son, in whom (or for whose sake) I am

* Luke xxiii. 35. † Matt. iii. 17.

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well pleased.' He afterwards proclaimed his* own authority and sufficiency, that all things were delivered into his hands, and invited every weary, heavy laden soul to seek to him for refreshment and peace. He gave the most express assurances,† that whoever applied to him should in no case be rejected. He‡ mentioned his death and sufferings as the principal circumstances that should engage the hearts and confirm the hopes of sinners. He gave repeated promises that those who believe in him shall never§ perish, that neither force nor fraud should frustrate his intentions in their favour; that after his ascension he would send the Holy Spirit‖ to supply his bodily presence; that his power, grace, and providence, should be with his people to the end of the world; and, finally, that he would manage their¶ concerns in heaven, and at length return to take them to himself, that they might be with him for ever, to behold and to share his glory.

4. In this revelation God has illustriously displayed the glory of his free grace. The miserable and guilty, who find themselves without either plea or hope but what the Gospel proclaims by Christ, are invited without exception, and received without condition. Though they have been the vilest offenders, they are freely accepted in the Beloved, and none of their iniquities shall be remembered any more. On the contrary, the most respectable characters amongst men are declared to be of no avail in point of acceptance with God; but in this respect all the race of Adam are upon equal terms, and must be involved in the same ruin, without an absolute dependence on the great Mediator. This is an illustrious peculiarity of the Gospel, which the proud, fallen nature of man cannot but resist and find fault with, till the conscience is truly affected with the guilt and demerit of sin. The whole tenour of our Saviour's ministry was suited to depreciate the most specious attainments of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and to encourage all who felt and confessed themselves to be miserable sinners.

Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

This was a chief cause of the opposition he met with in his own person, and has awakened the hatred and dislike of the bulk of mankind against his doctrine ever since. It is necessary, therefore, to confirm it by proofs which cannot be evaded by any who profess to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent from God.

* Matt. xi. 27, 28. † John vi. 37. ‡ John xii. 32, 33. § John x. 28.
‖ John xvi. 7. 13, 14. Matt. xxviii. 20. ¶ John xiv. 3. 13, 14.

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He was daily conversant with many who were wise and righteous in their own eyes, and we find he omits no opportunity to expose and condemn their pretensions. He spake one parable purposely to persons of this stamp,* and describes a Pharisee boasting of his observance of the law. He paid tythes, he fasted, he prayed, he was not chargeable with adultery or extortion. He could say more for himself than many can who affect to be thought religious. But the poor publican, (though despicable in his sight,) who, conscious of his unworthiness, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried for mercy, was in a happier and safer condition than the other with all his boasted obedience.

Another remarkable instance is that of the ruler,† who accosted our Lord in a respectful manner, asking him what he should do to inherit eternal life. His address was becoming, his inquiry seemed sincere, and the character he gave of himself was such as men, who see not the heart, might have judged exemplary and praise-worthy. When our Lord referred him to the precepts of the law, he answered that he had kept them all from his youth. Yet one thing, we read, was wanting. What could this one thing be, which rendered so fair a character of no value? We may collect it from the event. He wanted a deep sense of his need of a Saviour. If he had been possessed of this one thing, he would willingly have relinquished all to follow Jesus. But ignorant of the spirituality of the law, he trusted to a defective obedience; and the love of the world prevailing in his heart, he chose rather to part with Christ than with his possessions.

On the other hand, how readily our Lord received sinners, notorious sinners, who were vile to a proverb, appears from the remarkable account given by Luke‡ of a woman whose character had been so infamous that the Pharisee wondered that Jesus could permit her to touch him. But though a great sinner, she found great forgiveness; therefore she loved much and wept§ much. She had nothing to say for herself; but Jesus espoused her cause, and pronounced her pardon. He likewise silenced the proud caviller by a parable, that sweetly illustrates the freeness and genuine effect of the grace of God, which can only be possessed or prized by those who see they must perish without it.

* Luke xviii. 9—14. † Matt. xix. 16. Luke xviii. 18. ‡ Luke vii. 37.

§ She washed his feet with tears. Ἤρξατο βρέχειν, She began to rain tears upon his feet. Her head was waters, and her eyes fountains. To receive a free pardon of many sins, a pardon bought with blood—'tis this causes the heart to melt, and the eyes to flow.

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And this was the general effect of his preaching. Publicans and sinners thronged to hear him, received his doctrine, and found rest for their souls. As this discrimination gave a general offence, he took occasion to deliver the parable of the prodigal;* in the former part of which he gives a most endearing view of the grace of God, in pardoning and accepting the most undeserving. He afterwards, in the close, shows the pride, stubbornness, and enmity of the self-righteous Pharisees, under the character of the elder† brother. While his language and deportment discovered the disobedience and malice of his heart, he pretended that he had never broke his father's commands. The self-condemned sinner, when he first receives hope of pardon, experiences a joy and peace in believing: this is represented by the feast and fatted calf. But the religious, orderly brother had never received so much as a kid. He had found no true comfort in all his formal round of duties; and therefore was exceedingly angry that the prodigal should at once obtain those marks of favour which he, who had remained with his father, had been always a stranger to.

But the capital exemplification of this, and indeed of every doctrine of the Gospel, is contained in the account given of the thief‡ upon the cross; a passage which has, perhaps, been more mistaken and misrepresented by commentators, than any other in the New Testament. The grace of God has shone so bright in this instance, that it has dazzled the eyes even of good men. They have attempted to palliate the offender's crime, or at least, to suppose that this was the first fault of the kind he had committed; that perhaps he had been surprised into it, and might, in other respects, have been of a fairer character. They conjecture that this was the first time he had heard of Jesus, and that there was not only some sort of merit in his faith and confession under these circumstances, but that the death of Jesus happily coinciding with his own, afforded him an advantage peculiar to himself; and that, therefore, this was an exempt case, and not to be drawn into a precedent to after-times.

If it was my professed design to comment upon this malefactor's case, I should consider it in a different light. The nature of

* Luke xv. 11.

† It may be objected to this interpretation, that the father speaks to the elder brother in terms of complacence. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." But this is not the only place where our Lord addresses the Pharisees in their own style, according to the opinion they conceived of themselves. Thus, Matt. viii. 12, he says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness"—he does not mean those who were truly the children of the kingdom, but those who pretended to be so.

‡ Luke xxiii. 39—43.

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his punishment, which was seldom inflicted but on those who were judged the most atrocious criminals, makes it more than probable that he did not suffer for a first offence. Nor was he simply a *thief*. The history of those times abounds with the mischiefs committed by public robbers, who used to join in considerable bands for rapine and murder, and commit the greatest excesses. In all likelihood, the malefactors crucified with Jesus were of this sort, accomplices and equals in guilt, and, therefore, judged to die together, receiving (as appears by the criminal's own confession on the cross) the just reward of their deeds.* Here was, indeed, a fair occasion to show the sovereignty and triumph of grace, contrasted with the most desperate pitch of obdurate wickedness; to show on the one hand, that the compassion and the power of Christ were not diminished when his sufferings were at the height, and he seemed abandoned to his enemies; and, on the other, the insufficiency of any means to change a sinner's heart without the powerful efficacy of divine grace. The one malefactor, brought, at length, to deserved punishment, far from repenting of his crimes, regardless of his immediate appearance before God, thought it some relaxation of his torments, to join with the barbarous multitude in reviling Jesus, who hung upon a cross by his side. He was not ignorant that Jesus was put to death for professing himself the Messiah; but he upbraided him with his character, and treated him as an impostor. In this man we see the progress, wages, and effects of sin. His wickedness brought him to a terrible end, and sealed him up under a fatal hardness of heart, so that he died desperate, though Jesus Christ was† crucified before his eyes. But his companion was impressed by what he saw; his heart relented. He observed the patience of the divine Sufferer; he heard him pray for his murderers: he felt himself miserable, and feared the God with whom he had to do. In this distress he received faith to apply to Jesus, and his prayer was granted and exceeded. He who sent the fair-spoken ruler away sorrowful, answered the first desire of a malefactor at the point of death; 'This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' This certainly was an instance of free, distinguishing grace.

* It seems probable, from the history, that these were of Barabbas's gang. They had made an insurrection, committed murder, and were, with their ringleader, convicted and condemned. He, in dishonour to Jesus, was spared, whilst these, his accomplices, were executed with him.

† Comp. Matt. xxvii. 39. How can it be expected that no more than a constant repetition of Christ's death, should be an invincible means of changing the heart, when the actual sight of his sufferings was attended with so little effect? Sin must be felt as the disease and ruin of the soul, and the sufferings of Jesus acknowledged as the only possible remedy, before we can truly sympathize with him, and say, I am crucified with Christ.

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Here was salvation bestowed upon one of the vilest sinners, through faith in Jesus, without previous works, or a possibility of performing any. And as such, it is recorded for the encouragement of all who see themselves destitute of righteousness and strength, and that, like the thief on the cross, they have no refuge or hope but in the free mercy of God through Christ.

5. The medium, by which the Gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation, is *Faith*. By faith we do not mean *a bare assent*, founded upon testimony and rational evidence *that the facts recorded in the New Testament are true*. A faith of this sort experience proves to be consistent with a wicked life; whereas the Gospel-faith purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Neither do we mean a confidence of the forgiveness of sin impressed upon the mind in a sudden and instantaneous manner. Faith is, indeed, founded upon the strongest evidence, and may often be confirmed by ineffable manifestations from the Fountain of light and comfort; but the discriminating property of true faith *is a reliance upon Jesus Christ for all the ends and purposes for which the Gospel reveals him;* such as the pardon of sin, peace of conscience, strength for obedience, and eternal life. It is wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and presupposes a knowledge of him and of ourselves; of our indigence, and his fulness; our unworthiness, and his merits; our weakness, and his power. The true believer builds upon the* person and word of Christ as the foundation of his hope; he enters by him as the only† door to the knowledge, communion, and love of God; he feeds upon him by faith in his heart, with thanksgiving, as‡ the bread of life; he embraces his righteousness as the wedding‖ garment, whereby alone he expects admission to the marriage-feast of heaven. He derives all his strength and comfort from his influence, as the branch§ from the root. He intrusts himself to his care, as the wise and good shepherd¶ of his soul. Sensible of his own ignorance, defects, and his many enemies, he receives Christ** as his teacher, priest, and king; obeys his preceptor, confides on his mediation, expects and enjoys his powerful protection. In a word, he renounces all confidence†† in the flesh, and rejoices in Christ Jesus as his Saviour; and thus he attains to worship God in spirit and in truth, is supported through all the conflicts and trials of life, possesses a stable peace in the midst of a changing world, goes on from strength to strength, and is, at length, made more than conqueror, through him that has loved him. This is the life

* Matt. vii. 24. xvi. 18. † John x. 9. ‡ John vi. 54—57. ‖ Matt. xxii. 11. Rom. xiii. 14. § John xv. 4,5. ¶ John x. 14. ** John vi. 68. †† Phil. iii. 3.

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of faith. The degree and exercise of it is various in different persons, and in the same person at different times; (as has been already hinted;) but the principle itself is universal, permanent, and efficacious in all that truly believe. And nothing less than this faith is sufficient to give any man a right to the name of a Christian.

6. The final cause, or great ends of the Gospel respecting man, are* holiness and happiness; the complete restoration of the soul to the favour and image of God, or eternal life begun here, to be consummated in glory. What has been already said renders it needless to enlarge upon this head. Nor shall we concern ourselves here to vindicate this doctrine we have laid down from the charge of licentiousness; because it is our professed design in the progress of this work to prove, from the history of the church, not only that these principles, when rightly understood, will infallibly produce obedience and submission to the whole will of God, but that these only can do it. Wherever and whenever the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith have prevailed in the Christian Church, and according to the degree of clearness with which they have been enforced, the practical duties of Christianity have flourished in the same proportion. Wherever they have declined, or been tempered with the reasonings and expedients of men, either from a well-meant, though mistaken fear, lest they should be abused, or from a desire to accommodate the Gospel, and render it more palatable to the depraved taste of the world, the consequence has always been an equal declension in practice. So long as the Gospel of Christ is maintained without adulteration, it is found sufficient for every valuable purpose; but when the wisdom of man is permitted to add to the perfect work of God, a wide door is opened for innumerable mischiefs—the divine commands are made void, new inventions are continually taking place, zeal is diverted into a wrong channel, and the greatest stress laid upon things, either unnecessary or unwarrantable. Hence perpetual occasion is given for strife, debates, and divisions, till, at length, the spirit of Christianity is forgot, and the power of godliness lost, amidst fierce contentions for the form.

To sum up this inquiry in few words. The Gospel is a wise and gracious dispensation, equally suited to the necessities of man, and to the perfections of God. It proclaims relief to the miserable, and excludes none but those who exclude themselves. It convinces a sinner that he is unworthy of the smallest mercy, at the same time that it gives him a confidence to expect the greatest. It cuts off all pretence of glorying in the flesh, but it enables a

* Matt. i. 21. xxv. 34. John xvii. 24.

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guilty sinner to glory in God. To them that have no might it increases strength; it gives eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; subdues the enmity of the heart, shows the nature of sin, the spirituality and sanction of the law with the fullest evidence, and by exhibiting Jesus as made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to all who believe, it makes obedience practicable, easy, and delightful. The constraining love of Christ engages the heart and every faculty in his service. His example illustrates and recommends his precepts, his presence inspires courage and activity under every pressure, and the prospect of the glory to be revealed is a continual source of joy and peace which passeth the understanding of the natural man. Thus the Gospel filleth the hungry with good things, but it sendeth the rich and self-sufficient empty away, and leaves the impenitent and unbelieving in a state of aggravated guilt and condemnation.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the true ground of the opposition our Lord met with in the course of his ministry; and the objections and artifices his enemies employed to prejudice the people against him, and prevent the reception of his doctrine.

If our knowledge of the history of Jesus was confined to the excellence of his character, and the diffusive goodness that shone forth in all his actions, we should hardly conceive it possible that any people could be so lost to gratitude and humanity as to oppose him. He went about doing good: he raised the dead, healed every disease, and relieved the distresses of all who applied to him, without any difference of cases, characters, or parties; as the sun, with a rich and unwearied profusion, fills every eye with his light. Wisdom flowed from his lips, and his whole conduct was perfect and inculpable. How natural is it to expect that a person so amiable and benevolent, so blameless and exemplary, should have been universally revered!*

* The heathen moralists have supposed that there is something so amiable in virtue, that, could it be visible, it would necessarily attract the love and admiration of all beholders. This sentiment has been generally admired; and we need not wonder, since it flatters the pride of man without thwarting his passions In the Lord Jesus this great *desideratum* was vouchsafed: virtue and goodness were pleased to become visible, were manifest in the flesh. But did the experiment answer to the ideas of the philosophers? Alas! to the reproach of mankind, Jews and Gentiles conspired to treat him with the utmost contempt. They loved darkness, and therefore could not bear the light. They had more compassion and affection for the most infamous malefactor; therefore, when the alternative was proposed to them, they released Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, and nailed Jesus and virtue to the cross.

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But we find, in fact, it was far otherwise. Instead of the honours he justly deserved, the returns he met with were reproach, persecution, and death. The wonders of his power and goodness were maliciously ascribed to Satan; he was branded as an impostor, madman, and demoniac; he was made the sport of servants and soldiers, and at length publicly executed, with every possible circumstance of ignominy and torture, as a malefactor of the worst sort.

What could be the cause and motives of such injurious treatment? This is the subject of our present inquiry. It might, indeed, be answered very briefly (as it has been) by ascribing it to the peculiar wickedness and perverseness of the Jews. There is not a fallacy more frequent or pleasing to the minds of men than, while they act contrary to present duty, to please themselves with imagining how well they would have behaved in another situation, or a different age. They think it a mark of virtue to condemn the wickedness of former times, not aware that they themselves are governed by the same spirit. Thus these very Jews spoke highly of the persons of the prophets, while they rejected their testimony; and blamed their forefathers for shedding innocent blood, at the same time they were thirsting for the blood of Jesus.*. It is equally easy, at present, to condemn the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, the blindness of the people, and the malice of the priests, who were all personally concerned in the death of Christ. It is easy to think, that if we had seen his works and heard his words, we would not have joined with the multitude in crying, Crucify him: though, it is to be feared, many, who thus flatter themselves, have little less enmity against his person and doctrine than his actual murderers. On this account, I shall give a detail of the true reasons why Christ was opposed in the flesh, and of the measures employed against him, in order to show that the same grounds of opposition are deeply rooted in the fallen human nature; and how probable it is, that if he was to appear again in the same obscure manner, in any country now called by his name, he would meet with little better treatment, unless when the constitution and laws of a civil government might interpose to prevent it.

But it may be proper, in the first place, briefly to delineate the characters of the sects or parties mentioned by the evangelists, whose leaders, jointly and separately, both from common and distinct motives, opposed our Saviour's ministry, and cavilled at his doctrine. These† were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians.

* Matt. xxiii. 29, 30. † See Matt. xxiii. Mark vii. 13. Luke xviii. 9—14.

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The Pharisees, including the Scribes, (who were chiefly of this sect,) were professedly the guardians of the law, and public teachers of the people. They were held in high veneration by the common people, for the austerity of their deportment, the frequency of their devotions, and their exactness in the less essential parts of the law. They observed the traditions of the elders were still adding to them; and the consequence was, (as it will always be in such a case,) that they were so pleased with their own inventions as to prefer them to the positive commands of God; and their studious punctuality in trifles withdrew their regard from the most important duties. Their specious show of piety was a fair outside, under which the grossest abominations were concealed and indulged. They were full of pride, and a high conceit of their own goodness. They fasted and prayed, to be seen and esteemed of men. They expected reverence and homage from all, and challenged the highest titles of respect, to be saluted as doctors and masters, and to be honoured with the principal seats in all assemblies. Many of them made their solemn exterior a cloak for extortion and oppression; and the rest, if not hypocrites in the very worst sense, yet deceived both themselves and others by a form of godliness, when they were, in effect, enslaved by their passions, and lived according to the corrupt rule of their own imaginations.

The Sadducees, their antagonists and rivals, were equally, though differently, remote from the true knowledge and worship of God. They not only rejected the tradition of the elders, but a great part of the Scriptures likewise, and admitted only the five books of Moses as of divine authority. From this circumstance, together with the difficulty* they proposed to our Lord, and the answers he gave them, it appears that they were persons who, professing, in general terms, to acknowledge a revelation from God, yet made their own prejudices and mistakes, under the dignified name of *reason*, the standard to determine what books should be received as authentic, and in what sense they should be understood. The doctrine of a resurrection did not accord with their notions; therefore they rejected it, together† with those parts of Scripture which asserted it most expressly. Their question concerning the seven brethren, seems to have been a trite

* Matt. xxii. 23. Acts xxiii. 8.

† That the Sadducees received only the law of Moses, is the general opinion; though I do not say that it has been either indubitably proved or universally held. That they put their own sense upon the Scriptures, (whether in whole or in part,) which they did profess to receive, is manifest, from their asserting that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; a tenet which contradicts not one or a few texts, but the whole strain and tenour both of the law and the prophets.

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objection, which they had often made, and which had never been answered to satisfaction till our Lord resolved it. But the whole difficulty was founded upon false principles, and when these were removed, all fell to the ground at once. From this, however, we may learn their characteristic. They were the cautious reasoners of those times, who valued themselves on examining every thing closely, refusing to be influenced by the plausible sounds of antiquity and authority.

The Herodians* were those who endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with Herod. It is most probable that they received their name and distinction, not so much from any peculiar sentiments, as from attempting to accommodate their religion to the circumstances of the times. The Pharisees, boasting of their privileges as the children of Abraham, could hardly brook a foreign yoke; but the Herodians, from motives of interest, were advocates for Herod and the Roman power. Thus they were opposite to the Pharisees in political matters, as the Sadducees were in points of doctrine. And therefore the question concerning tribute was proposed to our Lord jointly by the Pharisees and Herodians: the former designing to render him obnoxious to the people if he allowed of tribute; the latter to accuse him to the government if he refused it.

From what has been said, it is evident the leading principles of these sects were not peculiar to themselves. They may rather be considered, universally, as specimens of the different appearances a religious profession assumes, where the heart is not divinely enlightened and converted to the love of the truth. In all such persons, however high the pretence of religion may be carried, it cannot proceed from a nobler principle, or aim at a nobler object than *self*. These dispositions have appeared in every age and form of the Christian church, and are always active to oppose the self-denying doctrines of the Gospel upon different pretences. The man who, fond of his attainments and scrupulous exactness in externals, despises all who will not conform to his rules, and challenges peculiar respect on account of his superior goodness, is a proud Pharisee. His zeal is dark, envious and bitter; his obedience partial and self-willed; and, while he boasts of the knowledge of God, his heart rises with enmity at the grace of the Gospel, which he boldly charges with opening a door to licentiousness. The modern Sadducee (like those of old) admits of a revelation; but then, full of his own wisdom and importance, he arraigns even the revelation he seems to allow at the bar of his narrow judgment; and as the sublime doctrines of truth pass un-

* Matt. xxii. 16. Mark iii. 6.

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der his review, he affixes, without hesitation, the epithets of absurd, inconsistent, and blasphemous, to whatever thwarts his pride, prejudice, and ignorance. And those parts of Scripture which cannot be warped to speak his sense, he discards from his canon as interpolated and suppositious. The Herodian is the man, however denominated or dignified, who is governed by interest, as the others by pride, and vainly endeavours to reconcile the incompatible services of God and the world, Christ and Belial. He avoids the excesses of religious parties, speaks in terms of moderation, and is not unwilling to be accounted the patron and friend of sobriety and religion. He stands fair with all who would be religious upon cheap terms, and fair in his own esteem, having numbers and authority on his side. Thus he almost persuades himself he has carried his point, and that it is not so impossible to serve two masters as our Lord's words seem to import. But the preaching of the pure Gospel, which enforces the one thing needful, and will admit of no compliances with worldly interests, interferes with *his* plans, and incurs *his* resentment likewise though, perhaps, he will show his displeasure by more refined and specious methods than the clamorous rage of hot bigotry has patience to wait for.

We now proceed. The first great cause why Jesus was rejected by those to whom he appealed, may be deduced from the tenour of his doctrine, a summary of which has been given in the former chapter. It offended the pride of the Pharisees, was repugnant to the wise infidelity of the Saducees, and condemned the pliant temper of the Herodians. The doctrines of free grace, faith, and spiritual obedience, were diametrically opposite to their inclinations. They must have parted with all they admired and loved if they had complied with him; but this is a sacrifice too great for any to make who had not deeply felt and known their need of a Saviour. These, on the contrary, were the whole, who saw no want of a physician, and therefore treated the offers with contempt.

Besides, their dislike to his doctrine was increased by his manner of enforcing it. He spoke with authority, and sharply rebuked the hypocrisy, ignorance, ambition, and avarice of those persons who were accounted the wise and the good, who sat in Moses's chair, and had hitherto been heard and obeyed with reverence. But Jesus exposed their true characters; he spoke of them as blind guides; he* compared them to 'painted sepul-

* Matt. xxiii. 27. Nothing is more loathsome to our senses than a corpse in a state of putrefaction, or a more striking contrast to the outside of a sumptuous ornamented monument. Perhaps the visible creation does not afford any

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chres,' and cautioned the people against them as dangerous deceivers. It is no wonder, therefore, that on this account they hated him with a perfect hatred.

Again: they were exceedingly offended with the high character he assumed as the Son of God, and the Messiah. On this account they condemned him to die for blasphemy. They expected a Messiah indeed, who, they professed, was spoken of in the Scripture; but they understood not what the Scriptures had revealed, either concerning his divine nature, or his voluntary humiliation, that he was to be the son and lord of David, yet 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' They denied his divinity; and themselves unwittingly fulfilled the prophesies that spoke of his sufferings; affording, by their conduct, a memorable proof how fatally persons may mistake the sense of the word of God, while they profess highly to esteem it.

What further increased their contempt of his claims, and contributed to harden their hearts more implacably against him, was the obscurity and poverty of his state. While they were governed by worldly wisdom, and sought not the teaching of God's Spirit, they could not but suppose an utter repugnance between the meanness of his condition and the honours he vindicated to himself. They expected a Messiah to come in pomp and power, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. For a person truly divine, who made himself equal with God, to be encompassed with poverty and distress, seemed such profane contradiction as might justify every mark of indignity they could offer him. And this difficulty must equally affect every unenlightened mind. If *man* had been left to devise in what manner the Lord of the universe would probably descend to dwell a while with poor mortals in a visible form, they would undoubtedly have imagined such a scene (if their thoughts could have reached it) as is described by the prophets on other occasions. The heavens bowing, the earth shaking, the mountains ready to start from their places, and all nature labouring to do homage to her Creator. Or, if he came in a milder way, they would, at least, have contrived an assemblage of all that we conceive magnificent; a pomp and spendour surpassing all the world ever saw. Expecting nations, crowding to welcome his arrival, and thrones of gold, and palaces of ivory, would have been judged too mean to accommodate so glorious a guest. But the Lord's thoughts and ways are different from man's. The beloved Son of God, by whom all things were

other image that would so strongly express the true character of hypocrisy, and how hateful it appears in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and before whom all things are naked and open.

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made, was born in a stable, and grew up in an obscure and mean condition. He came to suffer and to die for sin, to sanctify poverty and affliction to his people, to set a perfect example of patience and submission; therefore he made himself of no reputation, but took on him the form and offices of a servant. This was the appointment of divine wisdom; but so incredible in the judgment of blinded mortals, that the apostle assures us 'no man can say that Jesus is the Lord;' can perceive and acknowledge his inherent excellence and authority, through the disgraceful circumstances of his humiliation, 'but by the Holy Ghost.'* His enemies, therefore, thought they sufficiently refuted his assertions, by referring to his supposed parents, and the reputed place of his nativity.

Their envy and hatred were still more inflamed by observing the character of his followers. These were chiefly poor and illiterate persons, and many of them had been notoriously wicked, or accounted so; publicans and sinners, whose names and professions were vile to a proverb. And for such as these, and almost these only, to acknowledge the person whom they refused, and by professing themselves his disciples,† to set up for being wiser than their teachers; this was a mortification to their pride which they could not bear; especially when they found their number daily to increase, and, therefore, could not but fear their own influence would proportionably decline.

Once more: Mistaking the nature of his kingdom, which he often spoke of, they opposed him from reasons of state; they feared, or pretended to fear, that if they suffered him to go on, the increase of his disciples would give umbrage to the Romans, who would come and take away both their places and their nation.‡ Some, perhaps, really had this apprehension; but it was more generally a pretence, which the leaders made use of to alarm the ignorant. They were, in truth, impatient of the Roman yoke, prone to tumults, and ready to listen to every deceiver who promised them deliverance, under pretence of being their expected Messiah. But from enmity and opposition to Jesus, they became loyal at once. So they might accomplish their designs against him, they were content to forget other grievances, and openly professed they would have no other king but Cæsar.

These were some of the chief motives which united the opposite interests and jarring sentiments of the Jewish sects against our blessed Lord. We are next to consider the methods they employed to prejudice the multitudes against him. The bulk of the common people seldom think for themselves in religious con-

* 1 Cor. xii. 3. † John vii. 49. ix. 34. ‡ John xi. 48.

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cerns, but judge it sufficient to give up their understandings and consciences to their professed* teachers. They are, however, for the most part, more unprejudiced and open to conviction than their guides, whose reputation and interest are more nearly concerned to maintain every established error, and to stop up every avenue by which truth and reformation might enter. The Jewish people, uninfluenced by the proud and selfish views of the priests and rulers, readily honoured the ministry of Christ, and attended him in great multitudes. If they did not enter into the grand design of his mission, they, at least, gave him testimonies of respect. When Jesus caused the † dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, they glorified the God of Israel, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up amongst us, God has visited his people.' Now, what was to be done in this case? Would the Scribes and Pharisees stand unconcerned? No; it is said, in several places, they were filled with indignation,‡ and essayed every means to bring his person and miracles into disrepute. The methods they used are worthy of notice, having been often repeated since (as to their substance) against the servants of Christ.

1. They availed themselves of a popular mistake concerning his birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to the Scriptures; but being removed from thence in his infancy, to avoid Herod's cruelty, and his parents afterwards living at Nazareth in Galilee, he was supposed by many to have been born there. Even Nathaniel was prejudiced by this mistake; but happily yielded to Philip's advice to examine for himself. But it prevented many from inquiring much about Jesus, and therefore his enemies made the most of it, and confidently appealed to the Scripture, when it seemed to decide in their favour. ‖ 'Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' It is probable many were staggered with this objection, and thought it sufficient to invalidate all his discourses and miracles, since, let him say and do what he would, he could not be the Messiah if he was born in Galilee.

2. They urged that he could not be of God, because he infringed the law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath.§ This, though

* This is much to be lamented; for, 'if the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?' Matt. xv. 14. When the blind lead the blind, how, indeed, can it be otherwise; if the former imagine they *see*, and the latter are content to be *led*? Alas, for the people that are in such a case! alas, for their guides!

† Matt. xv. 31 Luke vii. 16.

‡ It is a strong symptom of hypocrisy and enmity to the Gospel, to be offended with any new and remarkable displays of divine grace.

‖ John vii. 42, 52. §John ix. 16.

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it may seem a groundless objection to us, was not so to many at that time, who knew not the spiritual design and meaning of the law, and, perhaps, had not the opportunity to hear our Lord vindicate himself. They urged this vehemently against the force of a notorious miracle, and not without some colour from the words of Moses * himself, who had warned them to beware of false teachers, though they should confirm their doctrine by signs and wonders.

3. They reproached the freedom of his conversation. Jesus was of easy access, and condescended to converse and eat with any who invited him. He neither practised nor enjoined the austerities which carry the air of superior sanctity in the judgment of weak and superstitious minds. They therefore styled him 'a glutton† and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners;' that is, (as they intended it,) a companion with them, and a conniver at their wickedness. Nothing could be more false and slanderous than this charge, or more easily refuted, if the people would examine closely. But as it came from teachers who were highly reverenced, for mortification; and as Jesus was usually attended by many with whom it was thought infamous to associate, it could not but have great weight with the credulous and indolent.

4. They laid much stress upon the mean condition of his followers. They were mostly Galileans, a people of small estimation, and of the lowest rank fishermen or publicans; while, on the other hand, few or none of the rulers or Pharisees, who were presumed to be best qualified‡ to judge of his pretensions, had believed on him. Those who are acquainted with human nature cannot but know how strongly this appeal to the judgment of persons eminent for their learning or station, operates upon minds who have no better criterion of truth. How could a Jew, who had been from his infancy superstitiously attached to the Pharisees, suppose that these eminently devout men, who spent their lives in the study of the law, would have rejected Jesus if he had been a good man?

5. When, notwithstanding all their surmises, multitudes still profess high thoughts of Jesus, beholding his wonderful works; they proceeded, with the most blasphemous effrontery, to defame the miracles they could not deny, and maliciously ascribed them to the agency of the devil.‖ This pertinacious resistance to the conviction both of their senses and consciences, was the highest stage of impiety, and constituted their sin (as our Lord assured them) unpardonable. Not that any sin, considered in itself, is

* Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. † Luke vii. 34. ‡ John vii. 48. ‖ Matt. xii. 24.

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too great for the blood of Jesus to expiate; but, as they utterly renounced and scorned his mediation, there remained no other sacrifice, but they were judicially given up to incurable impenitence and hardness of heart. Yet it is probable that even this black assertion was not without influence upon some who were wedded to their sins, and therefore glad of any pretext, how unreasonable soever, to refuse the testimony of truth.

6. Another means they made use of, (the last we shall enumerate,) and not the least effectual, to intimidate the minds of the people from acknowledging Jesus, was the convincing argument of violence and ill treatment. Having the power in their hands, they employed it against his followers, and made an agreement, that whoever confessed he was Christ should be put out of the synagogue,* that is, *excommunicated*. This decree seems to have been made by the Sanhedrim, or great council, and to imply, not merely an exclusion from the rites of public worship, but likewise a positive punishment, equivalent to an *out-lawry* with us. The fear of incurring this penalty restrained the parents of the man born blind, and prevented many others,† who were in their hearts convinced that he was the Messiah, from owning him as such. They loved the world, they preferred the praise of men to the praise of God, and therefore remained silent and neuter.

From such motives, and by such methods, our Lord was resisted and opposed by the heads of the Jewish nation. The scribes and teachers, to whom the key of knowledge was by authority committed, disdained to use it themselves, and those who were willing they hindered. Had they been wise and faithful, they would have directed the people to Christ; but, on the contrary, they darkened the plainest Scriptures, and perverted the clearest facts, to prevent, if possible, his reception. In vain 'he spoke as never man spoke,' and multiplied the wonders of his power and love in their presence. In vain to them. They pursued him with unwearied subtilty‡ and malice; traduced him to the people, and to the government, and would be satisfied with nothing less than his death. So obstinate and wicked is the heart of man; so fatal are the prejudices of pride and worldly interest. For, as we observed before, these tempers were not peculiar to the Jews; they are essential to depraved nature, and operate universally, where the grace of God does not make a difference.

* John ix. 22. † John xi. 42.

‡ Mark xii. 13. They sent unto him certain of the Pharisees *to catch him*. Αγρευω expresses the art and assiduity of sportsmen, in the various methods they use to ensnare, entangle, or destroy their game. It well suits the spirit and design of our Lord's enemies, in the question proposed, and is finely contrasted by the meekness and wisdom of his answer.

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To this hour the Gospel of Christ is opposed upon the same grounds, and by the like artifices, as were once employed against his person.

The doctrines which his faithful ministers deduce and enforce from the written word are no other than what he himself taught, namely, a declaration of his personal honours and authority, of the insufficiency of formal worship, in which the heart is not concerned, of the extent and spirituality of the law of God, and of salvation, freely proclaimed to the miserable, through faith in his name. The self-righteous, the self-wise, and all who are devoted to the pleasures and honours of the world, have each their particular exceptions to these truths. The wisdom of God they account foolishness, and the language of their hearts is, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' And the success of these doctrines, which is chiefly visible among such as they have been accustomed to despise, is equally offensive; yet so inconsistent are they, that if, here and there, a few persons who were before eminent for their rank, attainments, or morality, are prevailed on to 'account all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord;' this instead of removing their first objection, excites their rage and contempt still more.

And as the motives of their hatred, so their methods of expressing it are the same. They are not ashamed to adopt and exaggerate the most vulgar misconceptions; they set the Scripture at variance with itself; and, while they pass over the plainest and most important passages unnoticed, they dwell upon a few texts of more dubious import, and therefore more easily accommodated to their sense; with these they flourish and triumph, and effect a high zeal in defence of the word of God. They reproach the pure Gospel as licentious, because it exposes the vanity of their singularities and will-worship; and are desirous to bind heavier burdens upon men's shoulders, which few of themselves will touch with one of their fingers. They enlarge on the weakness and ignorance of those who mostly receive the new doctrine, and intrench themselves under the sanction of learned and dignified names. They even venture to explode and vilify the evident effects of God's grace, and ascribe the agency of his Spirit to enthusiasm, infatuation, and madness, if not expressly to diabolical influence. And lastly, so far as Divine Providence permits, they show themselves actuated by the primitive spirit of oppression and violence, in pursuing the faithful followers of the truth with censures and penalties.

But let who will rage and imagine vain things, Jesus is the King in Zion. He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

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There were a happy few in the days of his flesh who beheld his glory, trusted on him for salvation, and attended him amidst the many reproaches and sufferings he endured from sinners. Of these, his first witnesses, we are to speak in the following chapter. His Gospel likewise, though opposed by many, and slighted by more, is never preached in vain. To some, it will always be the power and wisdom of God; they know in whom they have believed, and therefore are not ashamed to appear in his cause against all disadvantages. Supported and encouraged by his Spirit, they go on from strength to strength, and are successively made more than conquerors, by his blood, and the word of his testimony.

CHAPTER IV.

Observations on the calling and characters of our Lord's Apostles and Disciples, previous to his Ascension.

From what has been observed in the preceding chapters, it is evident, that those who assert a principle of free-will in man, sufficiently enabling him to choose and determine for himself, when the truths of the Gospel are plainly laid before him, do thereby, (so far as in them lies,) render the salvation of mankind highly precarious, if not utterly hopeless and impracticable. Notwithstanding God was pleased to send his own Son with a gracious message; notwithstanding his whole life was a series of wonders, and all his actions discovered a wisdom, power, and goodness, answerable to his high character; notwithstanding the time, manner, and design of his appearance and sufferings had been clearly foretold; yet, so far as judgment can be made from the event, he would certainly have lived and died in vain, without influence or honour, without leaving a single disciple, if the same grace that provided the means of redemption had not engaged to make them effectual, by preparing and disposing the hearts of sinners to receive him.

In the account given us by the evangelists of those who professed themselves his disciples, we may discern, as in miniature, the general methods of his grace; and comparing his personal ministry with the effects of his Gospel in all succeeding times, we may be assured that the work and the power are still the same. The choice he made of his disciples, the manner of their calling, their characters, and even their defects and failings; in a word, all that is recorded concerning them is writ-

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ten for our instruction, and is particularly useful, to teach us the true meaning of what passes within our own observation.

First. Several things are worthy our notice in this view, with respect to the *choice* of his disciples.

1. They were comparatively very few. He was, indeed, usually attended by multitudes in the different places where he preached, because he spoke with a power they had never met with before, and because he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and did good to all; but he had very few constant followers. Those who assembled at Jerusalem, after his ascension, are said to have been but about one hundred and twenty;* and when he appointed his disciples a solemn meeting in Galilee, informing them before-hand of the time and place where he would come to them, the number that then met here is expressed by the apostle to have been more than† five hundred. We can hardly suppose that any who loved him, and were able to travel, would have been absent upon so interesting an occasion; but how small a company was this, compared with the many thousands among whom he had conversed in all the cities and villages through which he had passed, preaching the Gospel, and performing innumerable miracles for more than three years? Well might the prophet say, foreseeing the small success he would meet with, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' But since he, in whom the fulness of grace resided, had so few disciples, it may lessen our surprise that his Gospel, though in itself the power and wisdom of God, should meet with so cold a reception amongst men as it has in fact always done.

2. Of those few who professed a more entire attachment to his person, a considerable part, after attending him for some time, went back and walked no more with him. They were but superficially convinced, and rather struck with the power of his words and works, than deeply sensible of their own need of him. When, therefore, upon a certain occasion, he spoke of the more inward and experimental part of religion, the life of faith, and the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, so many were offended at his doctrine, and forsook‡ him, that he said unto the twelve, 'Will ye also go away?' which seems to imply, that there were few but these remaining. Therefore, though we

* Acts i. 15.

† 1 Cor. xv. 6. The word *brethren* there used does not prove that none but men were present at that time, any more than that, because the apostles, in their public preaching, addressed their hearers as 'men and brethren,' there were therefore no women amongst them, or the women were not considered as having any interest or concern in the Gospel Ministry.

‡ John vi. 66, 67.

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see at present that where the sound of the Gospel brings multitudes together, many, who for a season appeared in earnest, gradually decline in their profession, and, at length, wholly return to their former ways, we have the less reason to wonder or be discouraged, remembering that it was thus from the beginning.

3. Those who believed on Christ then, were chiefly (as we had occasion to observe before) persons of low condition, and many of them had been formerly vile and obnoxious in their conduct. While the wise and learned rejected him, his more immediate followers were Galileans, fishermen, publicans, and sinners. This was observed, and urged to his reproach and theirs; and the like offence has always attended his Gospel. But what enrages his enemies, fills the hearts and mouths of his poor people with praise. They* adore his condescension in taking notice of the most unworthy, and admire the efficacy of his grace in making those who were once wretched slaves to Satan, a free and willing people in the day of his power.

4. But this was not universally the case. Though not many wise, rich, or noble, were called, there were some even of these. His grace triumphed over every circumstance of life. Zaccheus was a rich man;† Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; Joseph, an honourable counseller. We also read of a nobleman or courtier who believed, with all his house. In every age, likewise, there have been some persons of distinguished eminence for birth, honours, and abilities, who have cheerfully engaged in the profession of a despised Gospel, though they have thereby incurred a double share of opposition from the men of the world, especially from those of their own rank. The number of these has been always sufficient to confute those who would insinuate, that the Gospel is only suited to the taste of the vulgar and ignorant; yet it has always been so small, as to make it evident that the truth is not supported by the wisdom or influence of men, but by the power and providence of God.

5. It is further observable, that several of our Lord's few disciples were under previous connexions amongst themselves. Peter‡ and Andrew were brothers, as likewise James and John;

* Luke i. 52, 53.

† Zaccheus was a chief or principal publican, to whom the rest were accountable; a commissioner of the revenue. 'And he was rich.' The Greek is more expressive, 'And this was a rich man;' Luke xix. 2: perhaps alluding to what had past a little before; chap. xviii. 25. This remark is added, to remind us, that what is impossible with men, is easy to him who can speak to the heart, and turn it as he will.

‡ John i. 40.

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and these, together with Philip, and perhaps Nathaniel, seem to have been all of one* town. The other James and Jude were also brethren. So it is said, Jesus loved Mary, and her sister, and Lazarus, three in one house; when, perhaps, the whole place hardly afforded a fourth; and more in a single village than were to be found in many larger cities taken together. This circumstance more strongly marked the discrimination of his grace, in making the means effectual where, and to whom he pleased. Such has been the usual event of his Gospel since. It is proclaimed to all, but accepted by few; and of these several are often found in one family, while their next door neighbours account it a burden and offence. It flourishes here and there† in a few places, while those of the adjacent country are buried in more than Egyptian darkness, and resist the endeavours of those who would invite them to partake of the same benefits. Thus the Lord is pleased to display his own sovereignty, in raising and sending forth his ministers when and where he sees fit, and in determining the subjects and measure of their success. If others dispute and‡ cavil against this procedure, those who believe have cause to adore his goodness to themselves; and a day is at hand when every mouth shall be stopped that would contend with the just Judge of all the earth. The impenitent and unbelieving will not then dare to charge him with injustice for dealing with them according to their own counsels and desires, inasmuch as when the light of truth was ready to break upon them, they chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

* Comp. Mark i. 16. Luke v. 10, with John i. 44, 45. These six, and more than these, were fishermen, John xxi. 2; and such they continued, only their net success and capture were so much changed, that it became a new calling; he made them fishers of men. In the fishermen's calling, there is required a certain dexterity, much patience, and a readiness to bear hardships. Perhaps many observations they made in their former business were useful to them afterwards. And the Lord still brings up his servants so that the remembrance of former years, (the years of ignorance,) becomes a rule and encouragement in future and different scenes of life.

† Amos iv. 7.

‡ See Rom. xi. 23. There are but few who dispute upon the subject of the Divine Decrees with that reverence and caution St. Paul expresses. In chap. ix. when an objection was started, he cuts it short with, 'But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' And here he breaks off abruptly, with, 'O the depth!' He seems to have followed the narrow winding streams of human reasoning, till he finds himself, unawares, upon the brink of an ocean that has neither bounds nor bottom. And every word expresses the reverence and astonishment with which his mind was filled. The wisdom of the divine counsels in their first plan; the knowledge of their extensive consequences in this world, in all worlds, in time, and in eternity; the riches of that wisdom and knowledge; the depth of those riches; his counsels inaccessible; his proceedings untraceable; all is wonderful in St. Paul's view. How different this from the trifling arrogant spirit of too many upon this topic!

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Secondly. In the *calling* of our Lord's disciples, and the manner in which they were brought to know and serve him, we may discover the same variety as, at this day, appears in the conversion of sinners by the preaching of the Gospel.

Some, from a religious education, and early acquaintance with the Scriptures, and the secret influence of the Spirit of God upon their hearts, are gradually prepared for the reception of the truth. They read, and strive, and pray; they feel an uneasiness and a want, which they know not how to remedy. They are sincerely desirous to know and to do the will of God; and yet, through misapprehension, and the influence of popular prejudice, they are for a season withheld from the means that would relieve them. But at length the preaching of the Gospel explains to them the meaning of their former exercises, exactly answers to the state of their minds, and thereby brings its own evidence. Similar to this was the case of Nathaniel: when our Lord referred him to what had passed under the fig-tree, where he had thought himself alone and unobserved, his doubts and scruples vanished in an instant. There is little doubt but Nathaniel had been praying under the fig-tree, and probably desiring a further knowledge of the prophecies, and their accomplishment in the Messiah. He had heard of Jesus, but could not fully clear up the objections made against him; but now he was convinced and satisfied in a moment.

The attention of some is drawn by what they see and hear around them. They form a favourable opinion of the Gospel from the remarkable effects it produces; but their first inquiries are damped by difficulties which they cannot get over, and they are ready to say, 'How can these things be?' Their interests and connexions in life are a further hindrance; the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, is a great restraint upon their inquiries; but now and then, when they can venture without being noticed, they seek further instruction. Now, though this hesitating spirit, which pays so much deference to worldly regards in the search of truth, is highly blameable; yet the Lord, who is rich in mercy, is often pleased to produce a happy and abiding change from such imperfect beginnings. As they increase in knowledge they gain more courage, and, in time, arrive to a comfortable experience and open profession of the truth; thus it was with Nicodemus; he was at first ignorant and fearful; but his interview with Jesus, by night, had a good effect. He afterwards ventured to speak more publicly* in his favour, though still he did not join himself to the disciples. But the circumstances of Christ's death freed

*John vii. 50.

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him from all fear, and inspired him to attempt the most obnoxious service, when the apostles themselves were afraid to be seen.*

Others are first prompted to hear the Gospel from no higher motive than curiosity; but going as mere spectators, they find themselves retained as parties, unawares. The word of God, powerful and penetrating as a two-edged sword, discovers the thoughts and intents of their hearts, presses upon their consciences, and seems addressed to themselves alone. The sentiments they carry away with them are far different from those they brought; and a change in their whole deportment immediately takes place. Such was the case of Zaccheus: he had† heard much of Jesus, and desired to see him; for this end he ran before and climbed a tree, from whence he purposed to see him unobserved. But how great must his surprise and emotion have been, when Jesus, whom he had considered as a stranger, looked up, called him by his name, and invited himself to his house.

Some are drawn by the report of others' freely declaring what the Lord has done for their souls. The relation awakens in them desires after him which are not disappointed, for he is rich enough to satisfy all who seek to him. So the Samaritans, whose expectations were first raised by the woman's declaration, '‡Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?' had soon a more convincing testimony, and could say, 'Now we believe, not because of thy word, but we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

To a few, the first impulses of divine grace come suddenly and unthought of, when their hearts and hands are engaged quite another way; as Saul, who was seeking his father's asses, received the unexpected news of a kingdom. A ray of truth pierces their minds like lightning, and disposes them to leave their schemes unfinished to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness only. ‖Thus our Lord passed by the sons of Zebedee when mending their nets, and §Matthew while busied at the receipt of custom. He only said, 'Follow me;' he used no arguments, he proposed no rewards; but he spoke to their hearts, and by the constraining power of his love, engaged them to a cheerful and immediate obedience.

Afflictions likewise are now, no less than formerly, a happy means to bring many to Jesus. He prepares them for heavenly blessings by embittering or removing their creature comforts.

*John xix. 39. †Luke xix. 5.
‡John iv. 29. 42. ‖Mark i. 16—19. §Mark ii. 14.

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Had they continued in prosperity they would not have thought on him; but the loss of health, or friends, or substance, disappointments in life, or a near prospect of death, constrain them in good earnest to seek for one able to deliver them. In the time of their distress they say, Arise and save us, Not that afflictions in themselves can produce this turn of thought. Too many, in such circumstances, toss like a wild bull in a net; but when he sends afflictions for that purpose, they accomplish that which he pleases. Thus, when he was upon earth, many who came or were brought to* him for the relief of bodily disorders, experienced a double cure. †He healed their diseases, and pardoned their sins. At the same time that he restored the‡ blind to sight, he opened the eyes of their minds. He sometimes made the afflictions of one, the means to bring a whole family to the knowledge of his grace. A considerable part of his followers were such as these, whom he had graciously relieved from distresses incurable by any hand but his. Some had been long and grievously tormented, had essayed every means, but found themselves worse and worse till they applied to him; and having known the happy effects of his power and compassion, they would leave him no more.

Lastly, we sometimes meet with instances of his mercy and ability to save even to the uttermost, in the unhoped-for conversion of desperate and hardened sinners, who have gone on with a high hand, regardless of mercies, warnings, and judgments, till they seemed past conviction, and given up to a reprobate mind. Their state resembles that of the demoniac, Luke viii. They are so entirely under the power of the devil, (though perhaps they vainly boast of freedom,) that no arguments, no motives, no resolutions can restrain them within bounds; but they break through every tie of nature, conscience, and reason, and are restless drudges in the service of sin, though they feel themselves miserable at present, and see inevitable ruin before their eyes. Yet even this case is not too hard for him on whom the sinner's help is laid. He can dispossess the legion with a word; he can take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive; bind the strong one armed, and divide his spoil. Happy change, when the power of grace not only sets the soul at liberty from sin and Satan, but puts it in possession of what were lately the instruments of its slavery! when all the powers and faculties of body and mind are redeemed to the Lord's use, and the experience of past evil is made conducive to future comfort and advantage! Such an instance was that great sinner, that penitent, be-

* Mark ii. 9. † John ix. 7—36—38. ‡ John iv. 53.

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lieving, happy soul, of whom it is emphatically remarked,* 'She loved much, because much had been forgiven her.' Sometimes the deliverance is deferred till near the period of life. The poor wretch, labouring under the pangs or dread of death, and trembling at the apprehension of falling into the hands of the living God, is snatched as a brand out of the fire; he receives faith in a suffering Saviour, and feels the power of atoning blood; his terrors cease, and joy succeeds, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus the expiring malefactor† was converted upon the cross, and received an infallible assurance of salvation.

Thirdly. The *characters* of our Lord's disciples, with the account we have of their defects and failings, may further illustrate the history of his church and Gospel, and afford an apology for the blemishes which, through human infirmity, do, more or less, attend the prevalence of his doctrines.

The grace of God has a real influence upon the whole man. It enlightens the understanding, directs the will, purifies the affection, regulates the passions, and corrects the different excesses to which different persons are by constitution or habit inclined. Yet it seldom wholly changes the complexion or temper of the animal frame. It does not impart any new natural powers, though it teaches the use and improvement of those we have received. It will dispose us to seek instruction, make us open to conviction, and willing to part with our prejudices, so far and so soon as we discover them; but it will not totally and instantaneously remove them. Hence there are a great variety of characters in the Christian life; and the several graces of the Spirit, as zeal, love, meekness, faith, appear with peculiar advantage in different subjects; yet so, that every commendable property is subject to its particular inconvenience. Perfection cannot be found in fallen man. The best are sometimes blameable, and the wisest often mistaken. Warm and active tempers, though influenced, in the main, by the noble ambition of pleasing God in all things, are apt to overshoot themselves, and to discover a resentment and keenness of spirit which cannot be wholly justified. Others, of a more fixed and sedate temper, though less subject to this extreme, are prone to its opposite; their gentleness degenerates into indolence, their caution into cowardice. The principle of self, likewise, which, though subdued, is not eradicated, will in some instances appear. Add to this, the unknown access and influence which the evil spirits have upon our minds; the sudden and new emergencies which surprise us into action before we have had time to deliberate; with many other considerations of a like na-

* Luke vii. 47. † Luke xxiii. 43.

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ture; and it will be no wonder that some things are always amiss,* in the best and most successful attempts to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. And it is further to be noted, that some individuals will be found, who, though seemingly engaged in the same good work, and, for a time, pretending to much zeal, are essentially defective in their hearts and views; and when, at length, their true characters are exposed, the world, who either cannot or will not distinguish, charge the faults of a few upon a whole profession; as, in the former case, they wound the character of a good man for unavoidable and involuntary mistakes. We shall, therefore, show that either the exceptions made, and so loudly reverberated in our ears against the Gospel doctrine, on these accounts, are unjust, or that there was sufficient cause to reject and condemn our Lord and his apostles for the same reasons.

The character of Peter is marked with admirable propriety and consistence by the evangelists. He every where appears like himself. Earnestly devoted to his Master's person, and breathing an honest warmth for his service, he was, in a manner, the eye, the hand, the mouth of the apostles. He was the first to ask, to answer, to propose, and to execute. He made a noble confession, for which our Lord honoured him with a peculiar commendation. He waited but for a command to walk to him upon the water. He was not afraid to expose himself in his Lord's defence when he was surrounded and apprehended by his enemies; and though, in this last instance, his affection was ill expressed, yet his motive was undoubtedly praiseworthy. His heart flamed with zeal and love, and therefore he was always forward to distinguish himself.

But the warmth of Peter's temper often betrayed him into great difficulties, and showed that the grace he had received was consistent with many imperfections. Though he sincerely loved Christ, and had forsaken all for him, he was, at one time, so ignorant of the true design of his incarnation, that he was angry and impatient to hear him speak of his sufferings, and brought upon himself a most severe rebuke. Not content with the ordinary services allotted to him, he offered himself to unnecessary trials, as in the above instance, when he pressed to walk upon the water. The event showed him his own weakness and insufficiency,

* A lukewarm, cautious spirit, can easily avoid and readily censure the mistakes and faults of those who, fired with an honest warmth for the honour of God, and the good of souls, are sometimes transported beyond the bounds of strict prudence. But though the best intention cannot make that right which is wrong in itself, yet the zeal, diligence, and disinterested aim of such persons are worthy of our esteem.

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yet his self-confidence revived and continued. When our Lord warned him again and again of his approaching fall, he thought, and boldly affirmed that it was impossible. He was sincere in his protestation, but the actual experiment was necessary to convince and humble him: accordingly, when left to himself, he fell before the first temptation. And here the impetuosity of his temper was still manifest. He did not stop at a simple denial of Jesus, he confirmed it by an oath,* and at length proceeded to utter bitter imprecations against himself, if he so much as knew him, whom he had seen transfigured in glory upon the mount, and prostrate in an agony in the garden. Such was the weakness and inconsistence of this prince of the apostles.

None of these excesses appeared in the conduct of the traitor Judas. He was so circumspect and reserved that we do not find any of the disciples had the least suspicion of him. But, whilst his heart was full of wickedness, he could find fault with others, and charge their best expressions of love with indiscretion. When Mary anointed our Lord's feet with ointment,† he was displeased at the waste, and professed a warm concern for the poor; but we are told the true reason of his economy: it was not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, which contained the common stock, intrusted to him. The charge of the bag is an office full of temptation; and an attachment to the bag has been often at the bottom of many censures and misrepresentations which have been thrown out against the people of God. It has been, and it will be so; but the Lord has appointed, that wherever the Gospel should be preached, to the end of the world, this action of Mary, with the observation of Judas upon it, and the motive from which he made it, should be handed down together, that we may not be discouraged at things of the same kind. Without doubt, the treason of Judas and his unhappy end, after having maintained a fair character so long, and shared with the rest in the honours of the apostleship, were to them an occasion of grief, and afforded their enemies a subject of reproach and triumph. But we may believe one reason why our Lord chose Judas, and continued him so long with his disciples, to have been that we might learn by this awful instance, not to be surprised if some, who have made a show in the church, been chosen to important offices, and furnished with excellent gifts, do,

*Mark xiv. 71. 'He began to curse and swear.' Αναθεματιζειν—to imprecate the most dreadful curses upon himself, and call solemnly on God to execute them. This was, indeed, the most probable method to free himself from the suspicion of being a disciple of Jesus, for no such language had been, till then, heard among his followers.

† John xii. 5, 6.

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in the end, prove hypocrites and traitors. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

A desire of pre-eminence and distinction is very unsuitable to the followers of Jesus, who made himself the servant of all; very unbecoming the best of the children of men, who owe their breath to the mercy of God, have nothing they can call their own, and have been unfaithful in the improvement of every talent. We allow that every appearance of this is a blemish in the Christian character, and especially in a Christian minister; but, if, on some occasion, and in some degree, human infirmity has wrought this way, though no example can justify it, yet those who through ignorance of their own hearts, are too rigid censurers of others, may be reminded, that this evil frequently discovered itself in the apostles. They often disputed who should be the greatest; and when our Lord was speaking of his approaching sufferings, two of them chose that unseasonable time to preclude the rest, and petitioned that they might have the chief seats in his kingdom. The first offence was theirs; but when the ten heard it, they were all moved with indignation, and showed themselves equally desirous of superiority. It is plain, therefore, that, unless the apostles were hypocrites and mercenaries, some transient escapes of this sort (though confessedly criminal and indecent) are no sure proofs that such a person is not, in the main, sincere, disinterested, and truly devoted to the service of God and his Gospel.

No less contrary to the meek and gracious spirit of Jesus, is an angry zeal, expressing itself in terms of ill-will and bitterness to those who oppose or injure us. One of the highest attainments and brightest evidences of true grace, is, from a sense of the love and example of Christ, to show bowels of mercy and long-suffering to all men, and by perseverance in well-doing, to overcome evil with good. And a contrary behaviour (if frequent and notorious) will, like a dead fly in precious ointment, destroy its savour, if not the efficacy, of all we can attempt for the service of God in the world. However, if repeated falsehoods and studied provocations do sometimes, in an unguarded moment, extort from the disciples of Christ such expressions and marks of displeasure, as in their cooler hours they willingly retract and sincerely repent of before God, this ought not to be exaggerated beyond bounds, as an offence inconsistent with their profession; at least, not by any who would be afraid to speak dishonourably of the apostles James and John, who once went so far in their

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anger* as to demand, that fire might be sent from heaven to devour their adversaries.

We might proceed to other particulars; but enough has been said to show the general resemblance which the preaching of the Gospel in later times bears to our Lord's personal ministry. The doctrine is the same, the effects the same. It was, and it is, to many, 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.' The opposition it has met with has been always owing to the same evil principles of pride, and the love of sin, which are latent in every unrenewed heart: though the pretexts are various, they may be reduced to a few leading motives, which are always at work. The professors of this Gospel have at no time been very numerous, if compared with those who have rejected it; and of these too many have dishonoured or forsaken it: neither have those who have received it most cordially, and been most desirous to adorn and promote it, been wholly exempt from mistakes and imperfections. The tenour of their conduct has proved them partakers of a more excellent spirit than others; their faith in Jesus has not been an empty notion, but fruitful of good works, such as no man could do except God was with him. They have been governed by higher motives, and devoted to nobler aims, than the world can either understand or bear; yet they are deeply conscious of inherent infirmity, and sometimes, to their great grief, they give too visible proofs of it, which their watchful adversaries are glad to aggravate, and charge upon them as consequences of their doctrine. This should induce all who love the Lord Jesus to redouble their guard, and to pray, with David, that they may be led in the right way because of their observers. If the question is concerning the infirmities or even the vices of others, almost every one is ready to plead in their behalf: allowances are freely and largely made for human frailty, and none are willing to be thought harsh or censorious. But the believer in Jesus must look for no abatement or extenuation; even the professed admirers of candour and charity will not hesitate to put the worst construction upon all he says or does;

* Luke ix. 54. They thought they were influenced by a commendable zeal for their Master, and that their proposal was warranted by an authorized precedent. We do not find that they ever wished for fire to consume the Scribes and Pharisees, who were Christ's most inveterate enemies. But when the Samaritans rejected him, the vile Samaritans, whom they, upon a national prejudice, had been accustomed to hate; then their hearts deceived them, and they indulged their own corrupt passions, while they supposed they were animated by a zeal for Christ. Are we not often deceived in the same way? Can we not silently bear, or ingenuously extenuate, the faults and mistakes of our own party, while we are all zeal and emotion to expose, censure, and condemn what is amiss in others?

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for they are seeking occasion to wound the Gospel through his misconduct. They are sensible that he is generally above them, and therefore rejoice to find, or pretend, a flaw, on which they may expatiate, to reduce him as near as possible to their own level. Though if their censures are extended to their just consequence, they will (as we have seen) fall hard upon the apostles themselves.

I hope that what I have said upon this subject will neither be misunderstood nor perverted. We do not defend even the infirmities of the best men; much less would we provide a plea for persecution or ambition. Let not the man who supposes gain to be godliness, who makes the Gospel a ladder whereby to climb the heights of worldly preferment, whose heart, like the insatiable fire, is craving more, and practising every art to accumulate wealth and honour in the church; let not the proud man, who would lord it over conscience, and, though unable to command fire from heaven, would gladly prepare fire and slaughter upon earth for all who will not venture their souls upon his faith; let not these avail themselves of the examples of James and John; but rather let them tremble at the reflection, that, while they manifest no part of the apostles' graces, they are entirely possessed of those tempers, the smallest traces of which our Lord so severely rebuked in his disciples.

The first believers, though not faultless, were sincere. The natural disposition of their hearts was changed; they believed in Jesus, they loved him, they devoted themselves to his service, they submitted to his instructions, shared in his reproach, and could not be either enticed or intimidated to leave him. Their gracious Master was their guide and guard, their advocate and counsellor; when they were in want, in danger, in trouble, or in doubt, they applied to him, and found relief; hence they learned, by degrees, to cast all their care upon him. He corrected every wrong disposition; he pardoned their failings, and enabled them to do better. His precepts taught them true wisdom; and his own example, which, to those who loved him, had the force of a thousand precepts, was at once the model and the motive of their obedience. To make them ashamed of aspiring to be chief, he himself, though Lord of all, conversed among them as a servant, and condescended to wash their feet. To teach them forbearance and gentleness to their opposers, they saw him weep over his bitterest enemies, and heard him pray for his actual murderers.

Thus they gradually advanced in faith, love, and holiness, as the experience of every day disclosed to them some new discovery of the treasures of wisdom, grace and power, residing in their

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Lord and Saviour. He explained to them in private the difficulties which occurred in his more public discourses; by his observations on the common occurrences of life, he opened to them the mysterious volumes of creation and providence, which none but those whom he vouchsafes to teach can understand aright; he prayed for them, and with them, and taught them to pray for themselves; he revealed unto them the unseen realities of the eternal world, and supported them under the prospect of approaching trials; particularly of his departure from them, by assuring them that he was going, on their behalf, to prepare them a place in his kingdom, and that, in a little time he would return to receive them to himself, that they might dwell with him for ever.

What he personally spoke to them, and acted in their presence, was recorded by his direction, and has been preserved by his providence for the use and comfort of his church: though his enemies have raged horribly, they have not been able to suppress the divine volume; and though invisible to mortal eyes, he is still near to all that seek him, and so supplies the want of his bodily presence by the secret communications of his Spirit, that his people have no reason to complain of any disadvantage. Though they see him not, they believe, love, rejoice, and obey; their attention and dependance are fixed upon him; they intrust him with all their concerns; they rely upon his promises; they behold him as their high priest, advocate, and shepherd; they live upon his fulness, and plead his righteousness; and they find and feel that their reliance is not in vain.

The disciples were content, for his sake, to bear the scorn and injurious treatment of the world; they expected no better usage, nor desired a higher honour, than to be fellow-sufferers with their Lord. When he proposed returning to Judea, at a time they thought dangerous, and they could not alter his purpose, they did not wish to be left behind; 'Let us go,' says one of them to the rest, 'that we may die with him.' It is true, when he was actually apprehended, the first shock of the trial was too strong; they forsook him and fled. He permitted this, both to exempt them from danger, and to let them know, that of themselves they could do nothing. But it seems they did not go far. When Thomas afterwards said, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,' he spoke like one who had been an eye witness to his sufferings, and expresses an earnestness, as if he still saw him wounded and bleeding. This catastrophe, indeed, almost disconcerted them; they had trusted it was he that should deliver Israel; but they saw him oppressed and slain by wicked men. From that time to his resurrection was

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a mournful interval, the darkest and most distressing period his church ever knew.

But the third day dispelled their grief; he returned victorious from the grave, proclaimed peace by the blood of the cross; he declared (and his appearance proved it) that the ransom was paid and accepted, and that, having now overcome the sharpness of death, he had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Then he spoke peace to their hearts, he opened their understandings to know the Scriptures, and breathed upon them his Holy Spirit; he conversed frequently with them during forty days, gave them a large commission to preach his Gospel, and an invaluable promise of his presence with them to the end of the world.

When he had thus confirmed them by those instructions and assurances which his wisdom saw necessary, he was received up to heaven. They followed him with their hearts and eyes awhile, and then returned to Jerusalem rejoicing. They were not ashamed of their crucified Lord, or unwilling to bear the contemptuous names of Galileans or Nazarenes, for his sake. They were not afraid, as if left like sheep without a shepherd in the midst of their enemies. They knew that, though they could see him no more, his eye would be always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer. They waited, according to his command, for a further supply of his Spirit, to qualify them for the important and difficult services which were before them. Nor did they wait long: a few days after his ascension, while they were praying with one heart and mind, the place where they were assembled was shaken as with a mighty wind; the Spirit of power and wisdom was abundantly communicated to them; they spoke with new tongues, and immediately began to preach boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus.

With this solemn and memorable event, I shall open the second book, and take up the thread of the Gospel History from that glorious day of Divine Power. The contents of this first book, namely, a brief view of the necessity and nature of the Gospel dispensation, the causes why it is and has been opposed, and the circumstances of the first believers, I have premised, as general principles, for my own and the reader's assistance in the progress of this work.

It is much to be wished, that every reader might be impressed with the importance of our subject. It is not a point of curiosity, but of universal concern, and that in the highest and most interesting sense. Most of the researches and disquisitions which employ the time and talents of men, are of a trivial or indifferent nature. We may range on different sides concerning them; we

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may give, or refuse, or retract our assent, when and as often as we please. We may be totally ignorant of them without loss, or be skilled in them all without deriving any solid comfort or advantage from them. But the Gospel of Christ is not like the dry, uninteresting theories of human wisdom; it will either wound or heal; be a savour of life or of death, a source of endless comfort, or the occasion of aggravated condemnation to all that hear of it. To receive it, is to receive the earnest and assurance of eternal happiness; to reject it, or remain wilfully ignorant of its characters and properties, will leave the soul oppressed with guilt, and exposed to the wrath of God for ever. It highly concerns us, therefore, to inquire, whether we believe the Gospel or no; whether what we call the Gospel, is the same that Christ and his apostles taught, and whether it has had the same or similar effects upon our hearts. We live where the Gospel is generally professed, and we are reputed Christians from our cradles; but the word of God cautions us to take heed lest we be deceived. We see Christianity divided into innumerable sects and parties, each supported by names, arguments, and books, and fighting for the credit of a denomination. But how many forget, that, in a little time, all these divisions and subdivisions will be reduced to two; the only real and proper distribution by which mankind (as to their religious character) ever was or will be distinguished, and according to which their final states will be speedily decided—*the children of God*, and *the children of the wicked one*.

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BOOK II.

OF THE SECOND PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

That I may neither encumber the series of the history with too many digressions, nor deprive myself of the opportunity of making such observations as the subject will suggest conducive to our main design, I propose, in the first chapter of this and the succeeding book, to give a succinct view of the progress and state of Christianity during each period; and then, by way of Appendix, to add one or more chapters, (as may be necessary) on such particulars as are of more immediate application to the circumstances of our own times.

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CHAPTER I.

Of the progress of the Gospel from our Lord's Ascension to the close of the first Century.

THE natural weakness of man is conspicuous in his most important undertakings: having no fund of sufficiency in himself, he is forced to collect all from without; and if the greatness of his preparations are not answerable to the extent of his designs, he has little hopes of success. Further: when he has planned and provided to the utmost of his power, he is still subject to innumerable contingencies, which he can neither foresee nor prevent; and has often the mortification to see his fairest prospects blasted, and the whole apparatus of his labour and care only contribute to make his disappointment more conspicuous and painful.

The reverse of this is the character of the wonder-working God. To his power every thing is easy; he knows how to employ every creature and contingence as a means to accomplish his designs; not a seeming difficulty can intervene but by his permission, and he only permits it to illustrate his own wisdom and agency in making it subservient to his will. Thus, having all hearts and events in his hands, he fulfils his own counsels with the utmost ease and certainty; and, to show that the work is his own, he often proceeds by such methods as vain men account weak and insignificant, producing the most extensive and glorious consequences from small and inconsiderable beginnings. Thus the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of human glory.

This observation might be confirmed by innumerable examples taken from the common history and experience of mankind; but the subject of our present undertaking exhibits the most illustrious proof. When the Jews had seen Jesus crucified, dead and buried, they expected to hear no more of him. His disciples were few, men of no authority, learning, or influence; and since their Master, who had made them such large promises, was at last unable to save himself from death, it was probably expected that his followers would disperse of course, forsake their supposed delusion, and return to their fishing, and other employments suited to their capacities and talents.

They knew not that Jesus had arisen from the dead, and had frequently shown himself to his servants, to comfort and confirm their hearts. They little thought that he, whom they had seen

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expire on the cross, was immoveably seated at the right hand of God, possessed of all power in heaven and earth: but his disciples knew this, and therefore continued to assemble in his name. We do not find that there was much notice taken of them till the feast of Pentecost, which was about ten days after his ascension. At this season,* by the Jewish law, the first-fruits of the earth were presented at the temple: an appointment, typical of those more sublime first-fruits of spiritual gifts and graces with which the Lord on this day enriched his disciples, (according to his promise,) enabling them to preach his Gospel, and make his word effectual to the conversion of a large multitude; as an earnest of that divine power by which he could support and extend his church and ministry to the end of the world.

When the hearts of God's people are united in love, and pleading his promises in the fervent exercise of faith and prayer, great things may be expected. Such was the happy state of his disciples on this solemn day. They were assembled with one accord: no jars or divisions had as yet taken place among them; they were animated with one desire, and praying with one mind; suddenly and wonderfully they obtained an answer: the place they were in was shaken as by a mighty wind;† their hearts were filled with the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit, and they were instantaneously enabled to speak languages which till then they were unacquainted with. These inward powers were accompanied with the visible symbols of fiery tongues, which sat upon each of their heads: a fit emblem both of the new faculties they had received, and of the conquering, assimilating efficacy of the Spirit by whom they spoke; whose operations, like the fire, are vehement, penetrating, transforming, and diffusive; spreading from heart to heart, from place to place, till the flame, which was now confined within a few breasts, was communicated to many nations, people, and languages.

The effects of this divine communication were immediately manifest: they were filled with love, joy, and faith, and began boldly and publicly to praise God. Their emotion and zeal could not be long unnoticed: those who first observed it spoke of it to others, and a rumour was spread abroad. Jerusalem was at that time the occasional resort of the Jews and Jewish proselytes, who were dispersed throughout the known world, and multitudes had come from different countries to celebrate the feast.

*Tiberius, A. D. 33. In fixing the dates of our history, I shall conform to what I think the most probable and authorised opinion, without perplexing either myself or my readers with the niceties of critical chronology.

† Acts ii.

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The promiscuous throng, who assembled upon the report, and had been accustomed to different languages, were therefore greatly astonished to hear of the wonderful works of God, every man in his own tongue. While some expressed their surprise at this, others ascribed it to the effects of wine, and showed their scorn and despite to the Spirit of grace, by reviling the apostles as drunkards. Thus they no sooner entered upon their public service, than they began to find the same treatment which their Lord had met with, and were, for his sake, the subjects of calumny and derision. This is a remarkable instance of the sagacity and temper which the men of the world discover in the judgment they form of a work of God; nor is it probable that our modern reasoners would have judged more favourably, if they could have been present at such a scene, where several persons were speaking loud at the same time, and each in a different language; since they account the operations of the same Spirt madness and folly, even where they are not attended with such extraordinary circumstances.

This weak and perverse slander was immediately refuted by the apostle Peter, who addressed the people in a grave and solemn discourse: and having, in few words, explained the nature of the fact, and shown that it was an accomplishment of ancient prophecies, he proceeded to apply himself more closely to their consciences. He assured them that what they saw and heard was wrought by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected before Pilate. He informed them of that honour and glory which he now possessed, and charged them as accomplices in the murder of a person whose character and dignity God had vindicated, by raising him from the dead. Though our Saviour had but few disciples during his personal ministry, he had doubtless left a deep impression of his words and works in the hearts of many. This discourse of Peter would naturally recall him to the remembrance of those who had seen him in the flesh, and lead them to reflect how earnestly and unjustly they had, at the instigation of their priests, compelled Pilate to put him to death. These reflections, the closeness of Peter's address, and the power of the Spirit of God, concurred to give them a deep conviction of their sin. They were pierced to the heart. They no longer wondered as curious spectators; but were solicitous for themselves, and cried out, 'brethren, what shall we do?' Peter then proceeded to open the treasure of Gospel-grace, and to direct them to Jesus, whom they had crucified, for salvation. The effect of this day's preaching (for though only Peter is named, it is probable there were more than one preacher or one discourse) was signally happy. Three thousand souls were converted, and, pre-

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fessing their faith and repentance, were, by baptism, publicly joined to the church.

A further addition was soon after made. Peter and John* having recovered a man from incurable lameness, by faith in the name of Jesus, the report of the miracle brought a great concourse of people together a second time. Peter improved the occasion to preach to them at the temple gate, to the purport of his former discourse. He had an attentive auditory; and his word was made effectual to the conversion of many. But by this time the enemies of Jesus were greatly alarmed at the progress of his doctrine; and having† notice of what had passed, the priests and Sadducees violently apprehended Peter, with John, and put them in prison. He had not finished his discourse, but he had said enough to be remembered; and this interruption, with the boldness of his following defence, made his words more regarded. The next day they were brought before the high priest, rulers, and elders; and being asked concerning the late miracle, Peter, who once had trembled at the voice of a girl, was not afraid to use the utmost freedom and plainness with the council and heads of the Jewish nation. He confessed the name and cause of Jesus; reminded them of their wickedness in causing him to be crucified, and, in direct answer to their question, assured them that the miracle was wrought in his name, and by his power. Though the council were highly offended with this language, and the more so, as they observed the persons who spoke were private and unlettered men; yet, being unable to deny the fact, (for the man who had been lame stood before them,) and unwilling to incur the odium of punishing an action they were ashamed to disapprove, they dissembled their rage, and forbidding the apostles to speak any more to the people, they dismissed them: yet they did not depart until they had protested against this inhibition, and declared their resolution to obey God rather than man.

The believers, though numerous, amounting to many thousands, lived in harmony and love, as children of one family. The greater part of them were poor; those, therefore, who had estates or money, willingly put their all into a common stock, for the use

* Acts iii.

† Acts iv. 16, 17. Many consultations have been held, and devices framed, to stop the progress of the Gospel, as if it was a dangerous infection; but all such attempts are vain. They may as easily restrain the dawning of the day as suppress the spreading of the Gospel when the Lord is pleased to raise up fit instruments to promote it, and to vouchsafe a season of refreshment from his presence. Then its influence cannot be restrained, a spark becomes a flame, a little one a multitude, and opposition only makes the effects more visible and noticed.

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of the whole, which was intrusted to the care of the apostles. This is recorded as an instance of the benevolent and disinterested spirit with which the Gospel inspired them; but is not enjoined as a precedent to be universally observed, since we have many proofs that the usual distinctions in civil life were retained in other churches planted by the apostles; and it soon gave occasion to discover, that in the best societies there may be found some unworthy intruders, and that very specious actions may be performed from base and dishonourable motives. Even under this richest dispensation of grace, there were some professors influenced by no higher motives than hypocrisy and vain glory. *Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, attempted to impose on the apostles by a concerted lie, and would have had the praise of giving their whole substance, when their avarice would only permit them to spare a part. As a warning to all pretenders who seek to join or serve the church from sordid and selfish views, Peter, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, denounced a severe sentence against this unhappy pair, and they both fell dead† at his feet. The cause and suddenness of their death was a vindication of the apostle's integrity and authority, and a seasonable admonition to others, to deter any from attempting to associate with the disciples who were not in heart devoted to the Lord.

The numbers of the believers still increased, and the report of the apostle's doctrine and miracles extended from Jerusalem to the adjacent parts. The priests and Sadducees, therefore, soon renewed their efforts to suppress them: they apprehended the apostles again, and put them in the common prison as malefactors; but the Lord, to confirm the faith and courage of his people, and to show how easily he can protect those who serve him, delivered them the same night by his angel. In the morning, when their enemies were met, and commanded them to be brought to the tribunal, they were surprised to hear that the prison doors were found secure, and the prisoners all escaped. They were, however, soon informed that they were not gone far, but were preaching boldly to the people, (as the angel had directed them,) regardless of their adversaries' designs against them. They were alarmed at this notice, and began to be apprehensive of the event;‡ yet hurried on by their enmity to Jesus

*Acts v.

†The apostolic censures were not like the papal anathemas, *bruta fulmina*, words without effect; they were accomplished in an instant. See Acts xiii. 11.

‡Acts v. 24. It is not only a fruitless, but a very uneasy undertaking, to fight against the truth and those who profess it. The boldest and wisest champions in this desperate cause are often brought to their wits ends, and to foresee their own disappointment.

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and his Gospel, they once more sent their officers to take them, which they attempted in the mildest manner possible; for, as the prosecution was groundless and malicious, they were not without fear lest the multitude should interpose; but they had to do with the followers of Jesus, who would countenance no tumult in their own favour, and were neither afraid nor ashamed to confess his name in the face of danger. The apostles, therefore, peaceably yielded themselves, and being brought before the council, were severely questioned for disregarding the late prohibition they had received. Peter and the rest answered with their usual firmness; they avowed the fact, and their determination to persevere,* and charged them as the betrayers and murderers of Jesus in stronger terms than before. The majority of the council were exceedingly enraged at their boldness; they were cut to the heart, and consulted to put them to death. But the more moderate advice of Gamaliel prevailed: he showed them, from some recent instances, that if this new sect was no more than a human institution, they need not give themselves trouble to suppress it, for it would soon sink and disappear of itself; but if it was indeed of God, their opposition would be not only in vain, but, in effect, a rebellion against God himself: he therefore recommended milder methods; and having considerable repute among them for his wisdom, the rest assented to him. In this manner the Lord, who has the hearts of all in his power, delivered the apostles a third time, by raising them an advocate from amongst their enemies; yet, to save appearances, and that it might not be thought the council had proceeded so far without good cause, they were not dismissed till they had been scourged, and again enjoined silence. They departed, rejoicing that they had the honour to suffer disgrace†

* Peter and the apostles answered, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' It should seem that this (if any) may be called a natural maxim, and that the rudest savage, or the least child, that can be made to understand the terms, must assent to the truth of the proposition as readily as they perceive that *two and two* make four. How strange then is it, that men of the greatest parts and penetration in other things so seldom receive it! There are few periods to be found, even in the Christian church, in which those who steadily acted upon this principle were not considered as heretics of the worst kind.

† Here were faith and love in exercise: to suffer reproach for Christ, was, in their esteem, an honour and privilege. It is mournful to observe how little of this spirit is to be found amongst us. How soon are we offended and troubled when our names are reproached; how uneasy to lie under contempt; how impatient to justify ourselves, and to be thought well of by all persons! Far from accounting it an honour to be made conformable to Jesus in this respect, we feel it a burden which we are restless to shake off; yet it must be borne, or we must give up profession and all: for neither are our characters more respectable than the first Christians, nor is the world better reconciled to the things of God now than it was then.

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for the sake of Christ, and returned to encourage their companions; continuing still publicly, and from house to house, to teach and preach in the name of Jesus.

†These were happy times, when the whole company of the faithful were of one heart and mind, firmly united in affection, sentiment, ordinance, and practice. Their adversaries, though angry, and desirous to injure them, were powerfully restrained by the Divine Providence; so that they enjoyed peace in the midst of war, and were favoured with much grace in their hearts, and a daily increase in their numbers. Yet it was not long before an occasion arose which might have had unhappy effects, if the wisdom and authority of the apostles had not provided an early remedy. The church, as yet, consisted only of Jewish believers; but these were distinguished into Jews properly so called, that is, natives and inhabitants of Judea; and Hellenists or Grecians, the name given to those of the Jewish race and profession who had been dispersed and settled in the heathen countries. Many of these, as has been observed, were at that time in Jerusalem, and among the first converts to the Gospel. As the multitude who were supplied out of the common stock were very great, it is no wonder if a few individuals were overlooked. Some unavoidable instances of this sort gave rise to a complaint, not only of negligence, but partiality in the distribution of the money; and the Hellenists, or strangers, thought the others had an undue preference shown them. The apostles, though upright and impartial, were unable to do every thing themselves, and therefore, to prevent such mistakes and suspicions, and that they might devote their whole time and attention to the more important services of the ministry, they entirely divested themselves of the pecuniary charge; and, by their advice, seven men were chosen, on whom, by prayer and imposition of hands, they solemnly devolved this trust. Thus the office of deacons was instituted: they were men full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost, and to them the care of the public money, and the support of the poor, was peculiarly confided. Some of them, perhaps all, were occasionally preachers: but this was no part of their office as deacons. By this expedient the cause of murmuring was taken away, and the peace of the church confirmed.

TIBERIUS, A. D. 34.] Thus the Gospel flourished in defiance of opposition. The Jews, provoked more and more, began to lose all patience; the mild counsels of Gamaliel could no longer restrain them, but their blinded passions hurried them to the last extremities. Stephen, one of the seven deacons newly elected,

† Acts vi.

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was the first who received the honour and crown of martyrdom. His zeal for the truth did not begin with his new office, though it is possible his undertaking that charge might place him more in view, and expose him more immediately to persecution. Promotions in the world are attended with worldly advantages; but such promotions in the church as are agreeable to the Spirit of God, will rather entitle a man to a larger share of labours and sufferings, and the painful pre-eminence of standing in the forefront of the battle, to sustain the hottest brunt of every storm. Stephen was no sooner a public person than he became the mark of public opposition. At first, they pretended to dispute with him; but when they were unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they had recourse to more effectual methods to silence him; they suborned false witnesses (a main instrument of persecution) against him, and having framed such an accusation as was most likely to alarm the prejudice and inflame the rage of the people, they brought him before the council, and charged him that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. Stephen, though alone, and unsupported in the midst of furious enemies, appeared firm and unmoved as a rock in the midst of waves; he was not only devoid of fear, but filled with joy;* the testimony of a good conscience, the honour of suffering for his Lord, and a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, not only preserved his soul in peace, but spread a lustre and glory upon his countenance; so that all who sat in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. In such a disposition, he thought it not worth while to attempt his own defence, but employed the whole time allotted him in behalf of his adversaries, that, if possible, by a distinct review of God's dealing with their nation, and their behaviour towards him, he might engage them to consider their ways, to repent and believe the Gospel. While he spake of the things that had been long since transacted; and kept within the bounds of Moses, David, and Solomon, they had patience to hear him; but when he began to make application to themselves with that warmth and plainness which the case required, they could hear no more; his words cut them to the heart; they no longer preserved the exterior gravity of their stations and characters, but gnashed at him with their teeth, as though they would have devoured him alive.

But vain are the attempts of men to intimidate those whom the Lord is pleased to comfort; he is always near, to support his faithful servants, and can manifest himself in a way which the

* Acts vii.

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world knows nothing of. Such a seasonable and sufficient discovery he made of himself to Stephen. As he looked steadfastly up to heaven, silently appealing from the injustice of his judges, he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing in glory at the right hand of God, as attending to all that passed, and ready to receive him to himself. Transported with this divine assurance, he was not at leisure to drop a single word to soften his incensed enemies: he endeavoured to communicate the glorious idea with which his soul was filled, and without regarding the sure consequences of such a declaration, he told them plainly what he saw. This determined their resolves. Hitherto they had been willing to preserve the form, at least, of a judicial process; but now, renouncing every restraint, and unmindful of their late acknowledgment to Pilate, that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, they stopped their ears, to shut out any remonstrance that might be offered, dragged him violently out of the city, and stoned him to death. His dying deportment, which showed how eminently he was filled with the spirit of Jesus, whom he saw, is recorded as a fit pattern for the imitation of all who should be called to suffer for the truth in succeeding times; he kneeled down with the sweetest composure, and having committed his departing soul into his Redeemer's hands, his only remaining concern was for his murderers, and his last breath was a prayer, that this sin might not be laid to their charge. Such resolution in the defence of truth, such calmness under sufferings, such tenderness and compassion towards those who oppose, are the surest marks of a high attainment in Christianity.

The death of Stephen, far from satiating the rage of the rulers,* rather animated and excited them to new mischief; they observed no further measures, but gave full vent to their cruelty, and raised a general persecution against the church. A young man, named Saul, whom the Lord, from before his birth, had designed for a nobler service, was at this time one of their most zealous and active instruments; he had been a consenting spectator of Stephen's death, and kept the raiment of those that slew him. Encouraged by their example, he soon entered upon action himself, and made havoc of the church; forcibly entering into their houses, and dragging many to prison, both men and women. The disciples, therefore, according to their Lord's direction,† gave way to the storm, and dispersed themselves throughout Judea and Samaria, spreading the knowledge of the Gospel wherever they went. Thus the methods taken to suppress the truth, proved (as they often have since) the means of promoting

* Acts viii. † Matt. x. 23.

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its progress: yet the Lord, who appoints limits, beyond which the fiercest attempts of men cannot pass, preserved the apostles in safety at Jerusalem, where he had further occasion for their service. Amongst the many who left the city was Philip, another of the deacons: he preached Christ and his Gospel in Samaria, performed many cures and miracles among the people, and a great number received faith, and were baptized. Here the Gospel triumphed over the illusions of Simon, surnamed Magus, or the Sorcerer, who, by his vain arts and arrogant pretensions, had long held the people in subjection and astonishment; but the superior power of truth dispelled the charm, his votaries forsook him, and even the impostor himself was so far convinced that Philip acted by that divine power and authority to which he had only pretended, that he professed himself a believer likewise, and behaved so fairly, that Philip admitted him to baptism, without suspicion; but when, soon after, Peter* and John came to Samaria, to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the new disciples, by imposition of hands, Simon discovered his true character: he offered money for a power to impart the same gifts; a proposal which showed his ignorance, wickedness, and ambition, in the strongest light, and proved him an entire stranger to the grace of God. From him the hateful practice of merchandising in spiritual concerns has derived the name of Simony; a crime which, though condemned by the laws of every Christian country as highly injurious and† reproachful to the Gospel of Christ, no laws or obligations have hitherto been able to suppress. Peter severely rebuked his hypocrisy, yet exhorted him to repentance and prayer. His words seemed to have some weight with Simon for the present; but we hear no more of him among the

*Acts viii. 14. They sent Peter and John. We find nothing in this book to countenance the pre-eminence which the Papists ascribe to Peter; he and John were deputed by all the apostles, and went upon equal terms; Peter did not send John, nor go himself, without the advice and direction of the rest. John had once desired to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, but he was now better instructed, and gladly went to impart to them the best gifts he could bestow. If the Lord is pleased to make any partakers of the same precious faith with ourselves, though they were once enemies, we should gladly forget all that is past, and receive them as dear brethren and intimate friends.

† In these abuses the church of Rome seems to derive rather from Simon Magus than from Simon Peter; yet it is to be wished such practices were confined to the church of Rome only. Our laws have guarded against them by a very solemn and circumstantial oath; but that this oath, if not literally broken, is often scandalously evaded, we need no other proof than the shameful advertisements which frequently appear in our public papers: not to say that though there is no money in the case, yet all presentations, exchanges, and advancements, that are transacted upon interested views, are so far Simonical in the sight of him who judges the heart.

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believers: on the contrary, he is recorded in history as an inveterate enemy to the faith and purity of the Gospel, and the author of those wild, absurd, and impure heresies, which disturbed the first ages of the church.

About this time an eunuch, or great officer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, who had been worshipping at Jerusalem, (which makes it probable that he was a proselyte to the faith of the God of Israel,) was returning homeward. Though this nobleman had been at Jerusalem, he had either not heard of the apostles and their new doctrines, or, being influenced by the priests and rulers, had not thought them worthy his notice. He was going home ignorant as he came; but the Lord, who is mindful of his people when they think not of him, appoints the time and the means of bringing them to the knowledge of the truth; and these are often seemingly precarious and contingent, that the work may more clearly be known to be his, and the praise ascribed to his power and providence. Philip, by the direction of an angel, intercepted the Ethiopian upon the road. He found him well employed, reading the prophet Isaiah, as he sat in his chariot: he had a very confused idea of the passage he was reading; but he knew it contained an important meaning, and was desirous to discover it. Those who have a just sense of the excellence of the Scripture, and peruse it, as he did, with a sincere intention to be instructed by it, may be encouraged from this instance to persevere, though they find it at present hard to be understood: he who gave them the desire, will, in due time, provide them a teacher, and make dark things plain to them. When Philip drew near, and asked him, without ceremony, if he understood what he read, he was not offended with the abruptness of his address, but courteously invited him to sit with him, confessing his ignorance, and the need he had of assistance. The passage which had perplexed him afforded Philip a fair opportunity of preaching Jesus: the eunuch believed, and was baptized in a water they were passing by. In this case there seems to have been no exertion of an outward miracle to confirm the word, nor was it necessary; the manner of Philip's meeting with him, the suitableness of the question to the dubious state of his mind, and the discovery he obtained, that the prophetical marks of the Messiah exactly coincided with the history of Jesus, afforded him sufficient evidence. The only extraordinary circumstance was the sudden disappearing of Philip, who having performed his service, was removed by the Spirit to Azotus, a place thirty miles distant; from whence proceeding along the sea coast, he preached at Joppa, Lydda, and all the intermediate places, till he came to Cesarea. In the mean time the eunuch, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness, pursued

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his journey to Ethiopia. We have no further account of him in the New Testament; but some ancient writers assure us, that he was the means of propagating the faith which he had received, first in his own country, and afterwards in places still more remote.

TIBERIUS, A. D. 35.] The church having suffered much from the violence of the persecution, the Lord was pleased to afford them intermission, and to give a remarkable* proof of the power of his grace, by the conversion of Saul, one of their fiercest opposers. He had been educated a Pharisee, in a zealous attachment to the law, and, from a mistaken principle of conscience, thought it his duty to suppress the followers of Jesus. The warmth of his temper prompted him to uncommon earnestness against them, and as he was a young man, he was probably further instigated by a desire to ingratiate himself with the Jewish rulers. Not content with the mischief he had done at Jerusalem, he still breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them, and meditated their destruction, even in distant places. With this view, he obtained letters of authority from the chief priests, and set out for Damascus, that, if he found any disciples there, he might bring them bound with him to Jerusalem. Little was he aware of the event of his journey! Little did the believers imagine that the man who now thirsted for their blood would soon be their companion and leader! The Lord often permits those to whom he shows mercy to run great previous lengths in their obstinacy and ignorance: their subsequent change is hereby more noticed; the riches of his grace are more remarkably exemplified for the encouragement of others; and such persons, from a lively sense of their past wickedness, and the undeserved favour they have received, are usually more strongly impressed with a sense of divine love, and more warmly devoted to his service. Some such there have been in every period of the church, and especially whenever there has been a remarkable revival of the power of godliness. When Saul was drawing near to Damascus, perhaps within sight of the city, anticipating his bloody designs, and exulting in thought over the defenceless sheep of Christ, whom he had been taught to consider as schismatics and heretics, who deserved to be extirpated from the face of the earth, he was suddenly surrounded by a glorious light, exceeding the brightness of the mid-day sun, and heard a voice, not of uncertain application, but expostulating with him, by name, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' If he was alarmed at the question, he was much more so, when, upon asking, 'Who art thou

* Acts ix.

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Lord?' he answered, 'I am Jesus the* Nazarene, whom thou persecutest.' So nearly is the Lord interested in his people, and so dangerous is it to injure them; he accounts their cause, their sufferings, their enemies, his own. The Nazarene was an epithet of contempt affixed to the name of Jesus by those who hated† him; and it is probable that Saul had often spoke of him in these terms: but now he found himself in the Nazarene's power, and unable either to escape or to plead; he fell to the earth, trembling and astonished beyond expression; he not only heard his voice, but saw his ‡person; an interview which he could not have sustained a moment, if the glory of Jesus had not been tempered with the milder beams of grace and love. The Lord spared him, accepted his feeble surrender of himself, moderated his fears, and dismissed him to Damascus, as a willing trophy of his victorious grace, and a singular instance how easily he can subdue the hardest hearts to himself. The brightness of the vision had overpowered his bodily eyes, so that he was led by the hand; but the eyes of his mind were opened; his heart, his aims were changed; he was become a new man; and, instead of threatenings and slaughter, he now breathed prayer and devotion to Jesus, and love to his people. He remained at Damascus three days without sight or food; but the Lord remembered his distress, and sent to him a disciple, named Ananias, who, from the character he had heard of him, was at first greatly surprised at the command he received to go to such a person; but the Lord condescended to acquaint him that Saul was a chosen instrument, whom he had appointed to do and suffer great things for his sake. When Ananias laid his hands on him, a thick film, resembling scales, fell from his eyes; his sight was restored, his mind composed, and he was immediately baptized. Saul had several companions with him in his journey, who saw the dazzling light, heard the sound of the voice which spoke to him, and fell to the ground, with surprise, as he did; they knew enough of the circumstances of the case to witness for him, that he neither imposed upon others nor himself; but we have no account that any of them were converted; the most extraordinary occurrences being insufficient to change the heart, without the interposition of divine grace.

Thus the late persecuting Saul was numbered with the disciples, and soon distinguished himself among them. He now knew, by experience, the wickedness and danger of opposing the Gos-

* This is the exact import of the Greek, Ιησους ὁ Ναζωραιος, Acts xxii. 8.
† And for this reason inserted in the title which Pilate put over his cross.
‡ Acts ix. 27. 1 Cor. xv. 9.

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pel, and was desirous to repair the mischief of his former rage and ill example. A sense of the mercy he had received, and compassion for the souls of others, made him seek every opportunity to persuade and convince the Jews, his former companions and brethren; but he soon found the same treatment from them which he himself had often offered to the disciples. They opposed and vilified him as an apostate, and at length consulted to kill him; his former zeal in their cause was forgot, or, if remembered, it was an argument suited to inflame their resentment. But no counsel can prevail against those whom the Lord protects. Saul had timely notice of their designs, and, because they watched the gates of the city incessantly, he was let down by a basket* over the wall; for, though he neither distrusted his cause nor his protector, he was not unmindful to employ prudent means for his preservation. But before this, he had made some excursions from Damascus, and visited Arabia; for his own words assure us, that it was not till the third year after his conversion that he returned to Jerusalem. In this interval the Lord, who had appeared to him in the way, by subsequent revelations, fully instructed him in the knowledge of his will, and qualified him for the apostolical office; so that he could afterwards say that he received neither his authority nor his information from men. When he came to Jerusalem he would have joined himself to the disciples; but they, remembering his former conduct, and not clearly informed of the manner and reality of his change, were at first afraid of him. They had a right to be satisfied of his sincerity. But being soon afterwards introduced by Barnabas, he related to them the means of his conversion, and the occasion of his leaving Damascus. He continued for some time in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, preaching and disputing in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Jews, who hated all the servants of Christ, could not but be particularly enraged at him, who had forsaken their party; against him, therefore, they chiefly set themselves, and making repeated attempts to kill him, he withdrew again from Judea, and went through Syria to Tarsus, in Cilicia, his native place.

CALLIGULA, A. D. 38.] †Upon his recess, the churches in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had an interval of rest. The Jews,

* 2 Cor. xi. 33. 'Through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall.' The Lord often confounds the pride of his enemies by the manner in which he delivers his servants; he permits violent oppositions and great preparations to be made against them, and then disconcerts the combinations of the *many* and the mighty, by feeble and unthought-of means.

† The Churches had rest, and walked in the fear of the Lord and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and were edified and multiplied; Acts ix. 31. Some well-meaning persons seem to forget this passage, when they take it for granted that

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about this time, were taken up with their own affairs. Caligula, who had lately succeeded Tiberius in the empire, presumed to arrogate divine worship to himself, and commanded altars and temples to be erected to his honour. He was readily obeyed in many places; but when he required his statue to be put up in the temple at Jerusalem, the Jewish nation engaged, as* one man, to prevent it. They had rejected the Holy One and the True, and the troubles were now beginning to take place, which ended, at length, in their total ruin and extirpation. Against this first affront and profanation intended to their temple, they united in earnest supplications to Petronius, the governor of Syria; and, with much entreaty, obtained permission to send their deputies to the emperor, who was, though with great difficulty, prevailed on to desist from his purpose as to the temple; but, at the same time, he forbade them, under the severest penalties, to oppose the erection or dedication of temples to him in any place without the city of Jerusalem. This injunction encouraged their enemies to affront their religion wherever they pleased, and laid a foundation for innumerable disturbances and dissensions, in which the Jews, whether aggressors or not, were always the greatest sufferers. While they were thus distracted among themselves, the believers enjoyed a favourable respite; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified and increased.

A. D. 39.] As Peter had formerly seconded the labours of Philip, the deacon at Samaria, he now visited those places where he had preached on his way to Cæsarea, and strengthened the disciples he found there by his doctrine and miracles. At Lydda† he restored a man to immediate health who had been many years ill of a dropsy. Being afterwards invited to Joppa, he raised Tabitha, or Dorcas, to life, to the great joy of the poor and the

the work of God cannot flourish, except there is a violent outward opposition against it. The world will dislike the Gospel; but it is possible in some measure to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing; and the Lord can, and often does, favour his people with peace, and put their enemies under restraint.

* Josephus de Bell. Jud. lib. ii.

† Acts ix. 32. 'He came to the saints at Lydda.' The Scripture does not use the word *saint* in the narrow and appropriate sense of some, or with that improper extent which others have given to it in after times: it is neither peculiar to apostles and fathers, nor applicable to all who bear it in the Roman calendar: but it is the common appellation of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are saved from sin and condemnation by his grace. There have been saints in all ages; but real saints (while living) have usually been branded with opprobrious names. The world, which knows not Christ, cannot distinguish his people; but will rather give the title of saints to many who have hated and persecuted the Gospel.

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widows, whom she had assisted by her alms and labours. While he made some stay here, his commission was enlarged, and he received direction from the Lord to communicate the Gospel to the Gentiles, which had hitherto been restrained to the Jews, except in the case of the eunuch, for which Philip had been authorised by the express command of an angel.

When our Lord sent forth the apostles to preach, while he was yet upon earth, he expressly confined their mission to the house of Israel; and though, after his resurrection, he commanded them to disciple all nations, they did not immediately understand the extent of his meaning. Though they were under an infallible guidance, they were not fully instructed at once; but received intimations of their duty from time to time, as circumstances varied, and as the designs of Divine Providence were successively opening. The great Shepherd and Head of the church has an appointed time and manner for the accomplishment of all his purposes: nothing can be effectually done, but when and where he pleases; but when his hour is come, then hard things become easy, and crooked things straight: his word, spirit, and providence, then will all concur to make the path of duty plain to those who serve him; though, perhaps, till this knowledge is necessary, he permits them to remain ignorant of what he has designed them for. By this discipline they are taught to depend entirely upon him, and are afterwards more fully assured that he has sent and succeeded them. Peter was not yet freed from the Jewish prejudice, that all intercourse with the Heathens was unlawful; or if he had been so himself, he could not have easily convinced the many thousands of his brethren who laboured under the same mistake. This service was therefore pointed out to him by means which left no room for doubt in his own mind, and enabled him fully to vindicate his conduct to others.

*Cornelius, a Roman centurion, or captain, with his family and dependants, were the first fruits of the Gentile converts. He lived at Cæsarea, a city not far from Joppa, and which was the ordinary residence of the Roman governors, and therefore promiscuously inhabited by Gentiles and Jews. It is not probable that he had never heard of Christ, or the new institution that was spreading under his name; but, without doubt, what he knew of it was only from public rumour, in which the misrepresentations of malice, and the surmises of ignorance, usually so far prevail, that persons of the best dispositions are often deterred from making those inquiries which the importance of truth deserves. But the Lord whom he knew not, had been gradually preparing him

* Acts x.

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for the reception of the Gospel. He was already reclaimed from idolatry; he was a devout worshipper of God, exemplary in his family, just in his dealings, and charitable to the poor. How few of those now called Christians can equal his character, while a stranger to the Gospel, we may collect from daily observation. Yet those who plead for the sufficiency of what they style natural religion, would do well to observe, that though he was in many respects a good man, and his sincerity was approved by God himself, yet he lacked one thing. But none who are made sincerely desirous to know the will of God shall be left finally destitute; he will find a way to give them necessary information. Cornelius, who had often waited upon God by fasting and prayer, and had, doubtless, at times, felt that suspense and anxiety which can only be entirely removed by a clear knowledge of the Gospel covenant, obtained, at length, an illustrious answer: an angel appeared to him, assured him that his prayer was heard, and directed him to send for Peter, who should inform him more fully of his duty.

It is observable, that though the angel was so minutely exact in his directions as to mention the street, and the very house where Peter resided he said not a word of the Gospel to Cornelius, but referred him wholly to Peter. The wisdom and goodness of God is pleased to make his people instrumental in teaching each other. This not only secures the honour of the success to him alone, but it conduces to their comfort and advantage. An angel could only speak historically, *that the thing is* so; but it comes nearer to our level when delivered by men who have been in the very case of others, and can say, experimentally, *that they have found it* so. Who so fit to commend the physician's skill and tenderness as those who have been themselves cured by him of a desperate disease? Peter had himself tasted that the Lord was gracious; he had greatly sinned, yet had been freely forgiven; he had seen his excellent glory upon the mount, and had received an express commission from his mouth. In these, and other respects, he was a proper person to proclaim him to others, more so than an angel from heaven. We may therefore safely infer, *a fortiori*, that no *man*, however great his talents may otherwise be, can be qualified, or fit to preach the Gospel, until he has known the evil of sin himself, and been a partaker of the pardoning grace of God, through a crucified Redeemer.

Cornelius was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. His example and instructions had been a blessing to his household; so that he had servants about him to whom he could communicate this extraordinary event, and depend on their fidelity. Having related his vision to them, he sent them to Joppa, to invite Peter to his house.

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When they departed from Cæsarea, Peter was under the influence of the national prejudice, which would hardly have permitted him to have gone with them; but while they were on the journey, the Lord prepared his mind to comply. The time was now* come, when it was necessary he should know the extensive designs of God in favour of sinners of all nations, people, and languages; and that the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and taken away, by the death of Christ. He received this intimation by a vision which exactly corresponded in its circumstances with the case in hand. About noon, the following day, when the messengers were near to Joppa, he was retired to the top of the house, for the convenient exercise of secret prayer; and, having an appetite for food, he saw, as it were, a large sheet, or wrapper, let down from heaven, suspended by the four corners, containing all sorts of beasts, birds, and reptiles, without any regard to the ceremonial distinction of clean and unclean: this appearance was accompanied with a voice directing him to slay and eat. When he answered that he had never yet transgressed the law by eating unclean food, the voice replied, what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean. To impress the whole upon his mind, and to convince him that the vision was real and significant, it was repeated three times. When it was finally withdrawn, and while he was thinking† what it might import, the men sent by Cornelius were inquiring for him at the door below: of which, receiving previous notice by the secret suggestion of the Spirit of God, and being directed to go with them without hesitation, he went down and spoke to them, before they had time to send him word of their arrival by the people of the house. When he had heard their business, and compared the vision of Cornelius with his own, he scrupled no longer; but lodging the strangers that night, he accompanied them the next day, taking with him five of the brethren from Joppa, to be witnesses of what the Lord intended to do. Cornelius, who earnestly expected his arrival, had assembled his friends and

* In the Lord's dispensations in favour of his people, there is often a counterpart, resembling that which is related in this chapter. The minds of two, or more persons are inclined, by different means, to concur in the same design, though, perhaps, they are far asunder, and know nothing of each other's intentions: in time, circumstances fall out, which connect their views, and prove that the whole was from the Lord.

† Peter was faithful to the light he had already received, and did not hastily follow the first impulse upon his mind; though the liberty seemed to be authorized by a voice from heaven, he did not accept it without consideration. His example should be considered by those who give themselves up to the influence of every sudden impression, without taking time to consider its nature and tendency, and how far it is consistent with the revealed will of God.

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dependants against his coming: he received Peter before them all with the greatest respect and cordiality, and gave him a particular account of what had passed, professing that both he and his friends were ready to receive and obey his instructions. Peter now perceived, and acknowledged, the great truth the Lord had pointed out by so many harmonizing circumstances; that the blessings of the Gospel were no longer confined to the Jews; but that Jesus was appointed 'to be a light to enlighten the* Gentiles' also. In his discourse to them he declared the person, character, and offices of Jesus, who had been lately crucified; affirming himself to have been an eye-witness of what he related; he asserted his honour and authority, as the Lord of all, the sovereign Judge of the living and the dead; that he was the Divine Saviour spoken of by the prophets, and that all who believed in his name should receive the remission of sin. Here we see the apostle's doctrine to the gentiles was the same that he had preached at Jerusalem upon and after the day of Pentecost; and the same with what our Lord had declared concerning himself, a *free and complete salvation by faith.* He did not, in the least, attempt to accommodate his subject to any supposed prejudices of his new hearers, but faithfully acquitted himself of his message, and left the event to God. The mystery of Christ crucified, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, was, by many of the Gentiles, accounted foolishness and absurdity; but the apostles proposed it simply and indifferently to all. In the present case the success was (what has, perhaps, seldom happened) universal; the whole company believed, and received the Holy Ghost immediately, previous to baptism, and without the usual imposition of the apostle's hands. This signal attestation with which the Lord

*Acts x. 34. Few passages of Scripture seem to have been more misunderstood and misrepresented than this and the following verse. As some have presumed, that St. Paul's doctrine of justification is corrected, if not confuted, by St. James, so the apostle Peter has been supposed to contradict both St. Paul and himself (see 1 Peter, i. 1, 2.) in another important truth of the Gospel. This mistake is more excusable in those who do not understand the original; but those who do, ought not to avail themselves of an ambiguous word. The Greek προσωπος, from whence προσωπολημψις is derived, does not convey the same idea that an English reader receives from the word *person;* it does not properly signify a personal identity, but the outward appearance and circumstance of a person or thing. Thus it is sometimes rendered *face,* as Matt. vi. 16. and many other places, and is applied to the sky or air, Matt. xvi. 3. *countenance,* Luke ix. 29. *presence,* 2 Cor. x. 1. *fashion,* James i. 11. The meaning here is the same as in Coloss. iii. 25. The Lord is not moved by the outward distinctions and differences amongst men, to which we often pay regard. (Compare 1 Sam. xvi. 7.) He neither receives nor rejects any for being Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, but is rich in mercy to all who call upon him.

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honoured their faith, unanswerably removing every doubt concerning their fitness, Peter immediately directed them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, through whom they had already received that inward and spiritual grace, of which baptism was the outward and visible sign.

When this affair was reported in Judea, it was not at first agreeable to those who knew not the warrant and grounds on which Peter had proceeded; so that, when he returned to Jerusalem, he found himself under a necessity of vindicating* his conduct to the Jewish converts: a full proof that they did not think him infallible, or possessed of that superiority over the whole church, which designing men, for promoting their own ends, have since ascribed to him. But though he was an apostle, and had acted by the express command of God, and though their expostulation seems to have been hasty and rough, yet he did not think it beneath him to give an orderly and circumstantial account of the whole business; they, on the other hand, were open to conviction; and, when they had heard of his relation, they instantly acquiesced, and glorified God for his grace given to the Gentiles. This mutual condescension and ingenuousness preserved the first Christians in peace, though they were not always exempted from mistakes and wrong impressions.

By this time the believers, who had been dispersed by persecution, had spread the Gospel beyond the bounds of Judea and Galilee into Cyprus and Syria, and, probably, to more distant parts, particularly to Rome, which, being the centre and conflux of the empire, would hardly be long unvisited; however, in all places the preaching of the word was confined to the Jews till Peter's mission to Cornelius afforded an authorized precedent for imparting it to the Heathens.

A. D. 40.] It was soon after publicly preached in Antioch, the capital of Syria, and no less eminent for luxury and depravity of manners; yet amongst these dissolute and enslaved people, the gospel of Christ, accompanied with a divine power, was suddenly and remarkably prevalent, to turn a great multitude from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The means of this happy change are expressly mentioned. What the philosophers had long attempted, in vain, by cold encomiums on the beauty of virtue, was speedily effected by those who simply preached the Lord Jesus, as the author, finisher, and fountain of salvation. When the news of this good beginning was brought to Jerusalem, the apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch, who, being a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost himself, was greatly re-

* Acts xi.

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joiced, when he saw the numbers and sincerity of the converts, and animated them, by his exhortations, to cleave to the Lord with steady resolution; for he was sensible of what they, perhaps, were little aware of as yet, how many arts the enemy of souls employs to discourage those who are beginning to walk in wisdom's ways. He afterwards went to Saul, and prevailed on him to leave Tarsus, and join with him in the service of the Gospel at Antioch. By the Lord's blessing on the endeavours of these faithful labourers, the church was so greatly increased, that the believers there first received the general denomination of Christians: a significant and instructive appellation, strongly importing their duty and relation to Christ and to each other; and has, therefore, universally obtained, and will, probably, subsist to the end of time. But though this name is accounted honourable with us, and has always been deemed, by those who truly deserve it, the noblest title, *the highest style* of man, it had not the same general estimation when first imposed. In the mouth of unbelievers, whether Jews or Heathens, it was a term of infamy and reproach, and expressive of the highest contempt;* and may be therefore ranked among the many opprobrious epithets by which the Lord's faithful followers have been marked out to the rage and scorn of the world.

Caligula, having rendered himself universally odious by his inhumanity and caprice, was assassinated in his palace, in the fourth year of his reign.†

CLAUDIUS, A. D. 41.] He was succeeded by Claudius, who, soon after his entrance on the government, bestowed the kingdom of Judea on Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod, styled the Great, (mentioned Matt. ii.) the nephew to Herod the tetrarch, who put John the Baptist to death. This prince experienced much of that vicissitude which usually attends ambition; he had been detained in prison and chains by Tiberius, greatly favoured and advanced by Caligula, and now seemed to have attained the summit of his wishes; but, employing his power to prosecute the church, he was suddenly cut off, in the height of his prosperity:‡ for who can harden himself against the Lord and prosper! Herod was a professed zealot for the law of Moses and the Jewish institutions, and studied by every means to ingratiate himself with the people. He first expended vast sums in the defence and ornament of the city; but it was in his power to attempt a still more acceptable service, by exerting his authority against the people

* —— quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat: auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum suppliciis affectus erat.—*Tacitus*, Ann. xv.

† Josephus's Ant. lib. x. ‡ Acts xii.

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of Christ; and the motives of vanity and popularity by which he was governed, prompted him to embrace the occasion. He began by apprehending the apostle James, the son of Zebedee, whom he hastily put to death; and finding that the Jews were highly pleased with this step, they proceeded to imprison Peter, intending to delay his execution till after the passover, [A. D. 44.] that his zeal against these innovators might be applauded by a greater number of spectators. This stroke, though very afflictive to the church, was wisely permitted to illustrate the courage and fidelity of the apostles. It showed, that their miraculous powers and high office afforded them no sure exemption from persecution; but that they ventured and acted upon the same principles of faith and love to Jesus, in common with other believers. Thus James finished his course and received the crown the first of the apostles. But Peter, being designed for further services, was still safe; though, to an eye of sense, he seemed marked out for a speedy sacrifice. Incessant prayer was made on his behalf by the disciples; and the united prayers of God's people have an efficacy which can be withstood by no human power. When he inclines them to join with earnestness and perseverance in prayer, it is because he has already determined to grant their petition. In this case the answer was signal, though not immediate. The night before Peter was to have been brought forth to suffer, he was sleeping between his keepers, with that serenity which is peculiar to those who have a good cause, a good conscience, and a steady faith in God. Neither the inconveniences of a prison, nor the expectation of death, could discompose him, for he knew in whom he had believed; but he was awakened by an angel, who freed him from his chains, opened the prison doors, and brought him into the street, unperceived by the guards. After the angel had thus set him at liberty, and was departed, Peter went to the house where his friends were at that instant praying for his deliverance. Thus they had a remarkable proof that the Lord is indeed a God that heareth prayer; and it is recorded for our encouragement.

In the morning Herod found himself disappointed of his prey. The guards, upon examination,* being unable to give an account of their prisoner, he commanded them to be put to death. It is probable that Herod, or his advisers, might suspect a miraculous

* Herod examined them himself. It is probable he found strong reason to think Peter had been miraculously delivered; but, like a *wise* politician, he dissembled his conviction, and, to stifle all suspicion, wreaked his resentment upon the soldiers. They, without doubt, believed there was something extraordinary in the case, and might have said so if they had lived; but dead men tell no tales.

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interposition, (as the apostles had been delivered the same way a few years before;) but to punish the keepers, as if they had been guilty of conniving at his escape, was the most likely method to stop further inquiry, and prevent the people from supposing any thing extraordinary in the affair.

Herod did not long survive this event. He lived and died a monument of the instability of human greatness. He was much devoted to his Roman masters, and had a taste for their magnificence. This induced him to celebrate games and shows at Cæsarea, in honour of the emperor: here he laboured to display the utmost of his grandeur. His pride was further flattered by the arrival of an embassy from Tyre and Sidon. These cities had incurred his displeasure; but, as they chiefly drew their subsistence from his dominions, they were compelled to supplicate peace; which, though they had highly offended him, they obtained, by their interest with Blastus, his chamberlain. The king appointed a day to receive their submission, when he appeared with a splendour that dazzled the eyes of the spectators. He addressed himself to the ambassadors in a pompous oration, suited, we may suppose, to give them the highest idea both of his power and his clemency. When he had ended, he heard his praises resound from every quarter; the multitude shouted, 'It is the voice of a god, not of a man.' His vain heart was elated with this impious compliment, which, indeed, was no more than had often been used upon such occasions among the Heathens; but when it was now adopted by those who professed a knowledge of the true God, the proud worm who durst be pleased with it, was made a sudden and awful example of the divine displeasure: the avenging angel of the Lord smote him, with an irresistible, though invisible stroke; and while surrounded with the fancied insignia of majesty, and in the midst of their idolatrous acclamations, he found and confessed himself a mortal. He was seized with excruciating pains, and expired in a few days, being, in a manner, devoured by vermin bred from his bowels. With his death the persecution ceased. He perished, and was quickly forgot; but the word of God, which he had attempted to suppress, grew and multiplied as before.

The church of Antioch, during this time, greatly increased, and enjoyed the benefit of many excellent teachers; some of whom were endued with a prophetical spirit, by which the Lord intimated his will to them in particular cases. In this way they had been informed of an approaching dearth, and as seasons of scarcity would severely affect the disciples in Judea, who laboured under peculiar difficulties, they *cheerfully* contributed to their relief, and sent the collection to Jerusalem by Saul and Barna-

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bas, who, having fulfilled their commission, returned to Antioch about this time.* [A. D. 45.] These two were soon afterwards appointed by an express revelation, to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel in other countries; they were set apart to this service by the solemn prayers of the church, and attended by John, surnamed Mark, who had accompanied them from Jerusalem. Thus they went forth, like Abraham, uncertain whither they were to go, but assured of an infallible guidance and power to direct and prepare the way.

It is generally believed, that nearly about the same time, the apostles at Jerusalem likewise separated to preach the Gospel in the districts respectively allotted them by the direction of the Holy Spirit; and we have some account from antiquity of their several provinces, according to which, they divided among them the greatest part of the known world, from India to Barbary, and from Abyssinia to Scythia. Indeed, there is no doubt but they executed their commission as apostles, and spread the Gospel far and wide; but the particulars recorded of their labours, sufferings, and circuits, are not transmitted with such authenticity and clearness as to give entire satisfaction. The only *certain* history we have of the apostolic age is that of Luke, which we call the Acts of the Apostles; and this, from the period we are now come to, is confined to those events in which Paul was personally concerned, and does not even carry on his history to the end of his life. The wisdom of God having given us, both in the life of Jesus and of his first servants, rather a specimen sufficient for our instruction, than a complete history to gratify our curiosity, to this plan we shall conform; and, while we have the light of an inspired writer, we shall not wander after the glimmerings of tradition. I shall, therefore, in the progress of this chapter, confine myself to the evangelist's narration, so far as it goes; and when he leaves us, it will be sufficient to comprise, in a very narrow compass, the most certain, or most probable incidents which we can recover to complete the records of the first century.

Saul and Barnabas embarked at Seleucia, a sea-port in the neighbourhood of Antioch, and sailed to Cyprus. They landed at Salamis, on the east side, and proceeded through the island to Paphos, in the west, making the first tender of the Gospel in every place to the Jews. At Paphos the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus was desirous to hear the apostle's doctrine. He was attended by Elymas, a pretended magician and prophet; who, fearing the discovery of his impostures, laboured to divert the governor from his purpose, and to prejudice him against them.

* Acts xiii.

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But Saul sharply rebuked his wickedness, and by the* impulse of the Holy Spirt, denounced a sentence against him suitable to his crime: he who endeavoured to detain others in darkness and ignorance, was suddenly struck blind himself. This punishment, which he could neither foresee nor avoid, discovered the vanity of his claims, and convinced the governor that the preachers spoke by an authority superior to their own; he therefore attended more carefully to their words, and became soon a partaker of their faith.

From Cyprus they sailed to Perga, in Pamphylia, where their attendant, Mark, either already wearied with fatigue, or apprehensive of greater difficulties, or from a fickleness and levity of temper, would proceed no further with them, but returned to Jerusalem. By this indiscretion he not only lost many valuable opportunities, which he afterwards regretted, but, in the end, gave occasion to a great difference between Barnabas and Paul. Such is the state of humanity, that those persons in a society who cannot do much good, are often, by their imprudence, the cause of much harm, even where they intend otherwise. From Perga they proceeded to Antioch in Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue. [A. D. 46.] Their habit and manners bespoke them Jews; but perhaps the rulers of the synagogue were not apprized of their character. When the ordinary service was finished, they were desired to propound their sentiments. Paul, who was usually the speaker, addressed them in a long discourse, a valuable abstract of which is preserved to us. In his introduction he reminded them of their ancient history and prophecies; but the sum and substance of his sermon was Jesus. He proved from the Scripture, that *He* was the Messiah, in whom the promises centered, and proposed him to all as the great object of faith, through whom, and by whom alone, forgiveness of sin was to be obtained, and a free justification from those offences for which the law of Moses had made no provision. In the close, he solemnly warned them of the danger of rejecting this Saviour and his Gospel. His discourse made no great impression upon the Jews; but some of the Heathens, who had been occasionally present, desired to hear the matter further explained: accordingly, on

* It is expressly said, Saul, or Paul, was filled with the Holy Ghost; therefore the severe expressions in his reprimand were not the effects of intemperate anger, but a solemn declaration of the sorcerer's true character: yet it is safer to imitate the apostle in his patience and humility, than in this singular instance. The power of God which accompanied his words, proved by what impulse and authority he spoke. We, who are not apostles, and who make no claim to apostolic power, shall act more in character, to conform to the general rule St. Paul has given us: 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

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the next Sabbath, almost the whole city was collected to hear the Gospel, which exceedingly offended the Jews, and prompted them to interpose with cavil and abuse. The apostles then told them in plain terms, that, though their message was first to them, yet, since they refused to receive it, they would henceforth freely proclaim it to the Heathens, from whom they expected a more favourable hearing: nor were they disappointed in their hope, for many of the latter received the word with joy, both in the city and adjacent country.* The Jews, further exasperated by this success, so wrought upon the passions and prejudices of some persons of influence, both men and women, who were probably proselytes, and superstitiously devoted to their new profession, that Paul and Barnabas were violently compelled to depart; but they left behind them disciples, the fruits of their ministry, who were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, and thereby enabled to maintain the faith, though their teachers were forced from them.

The apostles, shaking off the dust of their feet (as our Lord had commanded) for a testimony against the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, went from thence to Iconium, the chief city of Lycaonia, where they made many converts, both Jews and Gentiles. But the Jews who believed not, actuated by the same spirit in every place, opposed them† earnestly; yet they staid so long, and met with such success, that the city was divided; a part holding with them, and a part influenced by their enemies, who from thence took occasion to represent them to the magistrates as disturbers of the public peace; a charge which has often been falsely urged against the ministers of the Gospel. At length their adversaries prevailed, and violent measures were resolved on; but they, having notice of it, withdrew in time to Lystra, in the same province, where they pursued their ministry with their usual zeal and firmness, without being deterred by the opposition they had already met with, and were likely to meet in every place. Among their hearers at Lystra, there was one who had been a cripple from his birth. Paul observing his attention, and

* 'When the Jews saw the *multitudes*, they were filled with envy.' Among the clamours raised against persons and doctrines in our own time, some have not been ashamed to allege the great concourse of people usually attending, as a sufficient objection, forgetting (as it should seem) that this was one circumstance that provoked and instigated the enemies of Christianity from the beginning. John vii. 40. 48. and xi. 48. and xii. 19.

† Acts xiv. 'The Jews stirred up the people,' ver. 2. There is a natural enmity in the hearts of some men, but in many it is dormant; they are engaged in business and pleasure, and would be content to let the people of God alone, as unworthy their notice; these must be *stirred up* by the more zealous, to join in the common cause; and accordingly no pains or misrepresentations are spared to rouse them from their indolence.

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some indications of faith in his behaviour, was directed to confirm the doctrine of Jesus by a signal miracle. He commanded the lame man to stand upright upon his feet, and his word was accompanied with immediate power; the man, who had never walked, instantly sprang up, and possessed the perfect use of his limbs. It appeared from this instance, that though miracles have a tendency to rouse the attention, and are a proof of a power beyond the ordinary course of things, yet they cannot, of themselves, inform or convince the mind of truth; for the ignorant multitude, though greatly struck with what they saw, were so far from believing the apostle's doctrine, on the evidence of this miracle, that they endeavoured to account for it on their own idolatrous principles: they forgot all they had heard of Jesus, and cried out 'The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.' Agreeably to their blinded notions, they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury; imagining something in them peculiarly characteristic of those fabulous deities. In the warmth of their superstition they assembled with their high priest* and victims, and would have offered sacrifices to the men who came to turn them from dumb idols to serve the living God. But nothing gives the faithful ministers of Christ greater pain, than to have any part of that honour or dependence addressed to themselves, which they are desirous wholly to engage for their Lord and Master. Paul and Barnabas, who had suffered persecution and ill treatment with patience, were transported beyond their usual bounds at these marks of ignorant applause; they rushed in among the people, confessed their own infirmities, boldly reproved their blind idolatry, and directed them where alone their thanks and worship were due; yet, with all they could say, they hardly prevailed on them to desist. It was happy for them that they sought not their own glory, and could not be elated with the applause of men. Poor and precarious is the reward of those who aim no higher than this; for, as the tide, after running violently one way, soon and suddenly reverts to the contrary extreme; so inconstant is the praise and regard of the unthinking many, who are governed by appearances, and susceptive of every new impression. Some of the restless Jews followed the apostles from Iconium, and, by their insinuations, prevailed on the same people to treat those as

* The high priest was probably willing to avail himself of the superstition of the people, and thought it a favourable occasion to establish the belief of a peculiar sanctity and virtue in the temple of Lystra, which might increase the number of votaries, and promote his own wealth and influence; just as a legendary report of the appearance or miracles of some saint, or angel, has been improved to procure a veneration for particular cities, or temples, in Christian countries.

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malefactors, whom a little before they had revered as deities. They tumultuously assaulted Paul, (who being the chief speaker, was usually the chief sufferer,) stoned him, and dragged him out of the city, supposing they had killed him: but the Lord, to whom the issues of life and death belong, restored him, and healed his bruises, so that he rose up while the disciples were sorrowfully standing round him; and, having entered into the city, to show that he was neither dead nor intimidated, he was enabled to accompany Barnabas the next day to Derbe.

Here they continued some time, and taught many; and this was the boundary of their present progress. From hence they returned (regardless of their enemies) to the places they had been at before, to Lystra, Iconium, and Perga; confirming the believers, forming them into societies, and constituting elders and pastors from amongst themselves in every church. In all places they took care to instruct the believers in the nature of their profession, and reminded them of an unalterable necessity in the present constitution of things, 'that through much tribulation* we must enter into the kingdom of God.' After this, recommending the new converts to the grace and care of the Lord, in whom they had believed, they again took shipping, and returned to Antioch in Syria. Upon their arrival they assembled the whole church, and gave them a particular account of all that the Lord had done *for* them, and *by* them, in their late circuit. [A. D. 47.] This is the news which believers delight to relate and hear. The traverses of policy, or the events of war, (the usual topics of conversation,) afford them but little entertainment; but it rejoices their hearts to be informed of new accessions to the Redeemer's kingdom, and to see how his wisdom and grace triumph over all opposition.

Hitherto the church had only to struggle with outward difficulties; but, as human nature is always the same, and the apostolic-

*Acts xiv. 22. That this was the case in the primitive times, is generally allowed; but we have been told by some, that things are now greatly altered in this respect: they would persuade us that our Lord's words (Matt. vii. 13.) are no longer in force; that the way to the kingdom, in our happy days, is broad, spacious, smooth, and thronged by multit des, (the very characters he has given us of the road to destruction.) Such teachers and writers are little aware how they proclaim their own ignorance. If they knew the spirit of enmity which the world bears to true Christianity—the trials with which the Lord visits his people, to prove and exercise their faith—the assaults and temptations they endure from the powers of darkness—the griefs they feel from a sense of their own unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness—the fightings without, and fears within, which are more or less experienced in the Christian life—if they knew these things, they would speak otherwise. The beaten way to honours and preferments, is, perhaps, free from these tribulations; but not so the way that will lead to the kingdom of God.

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al times were to transmit instruction to the people of God in every succeeding period, mistakes, disputes, and divisions, were, by degrees, permitted to take place among professed believers. If it had not been so, we might not only have been discouraged by the great disparity between the first Christians, and those who have lived since; but, for want of rules and precedents of sufficient authority, we should have been continually at a loss how to oppose and confute the various errors which have appeared and been revived during so many centuries. The Divine Wisdom, therefore, thought fit to suffer every false and dangerous notion, whereby the enemy of souls would at any time attempt to corrupt the simplicity of the faith, to make its first entrance while the apostles were yet living, that we might have their instructions and examples to guide us in every emergency. However paradoxical it may seem, we hope, in a proper place, to show that no new opinion, either right or wrong, respecting the faith in Christ, has been started since the close of the Scriptural Canon. As the Gospel, that good and perfect gift, came down from the Father of Light complete, and has received no amendment from the hands through which it has successively passed, so, on the other hand, the grand deceiver exerted all his force against it, and availed himself of all his influence on the ignorance and wickedness of men from the very beginning, and has no subtle devices in reserve now, having tried his utmost resources over and over. It is true, length of time, and change of circumstances, have afforded him opportunities of placing his delusions in various lights, and have given some of his schemes a seeming strength and establishment which they had not at first; but, as a man attained to his full stature and vigour, is the same individual person that was once an infant, unable to stand alone; so there neither is, nor has been, any erroneous principle, however authorized or recommended, or perhaps applauded as a new discovery by those who are ignorant of Scripture or antiquity, but we can, from express passages in the apostles' writings, show that the same existed in their time, though in a more feeble and infantile state. This point we are to illustrate more at large hereafter; at present I am only concerned to take notice of a dissention that arose among the believers at Antioch, not long after the return of Saul and Barnabas, which made their presence there particularly useful. This was occasioned by some Judaizing professors, who came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile converts that, except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. This dangerous position, arising from a misapprehension of the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, and tending to substitute a quicksand for the

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foundation of hope, instead of the immoveable rock which God has laid in Zion, was warmly opposed by these apostles of the Gentiles. They had a double conviction of its falsehood, both from the nature of the faith they had received themselves, and the effects of the Gospel they had imparted to others; but many weaker minds, having less experience of the work of grace in their own hearts, and less acquaintance with what the Lord had wrought in others, were staggered. When, therefore, after many debates, the point was settled to satisfaction, it was resolved to depute Paul and Barnabas to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. [A. D. 49.] If this (as seems probable) was the journey St. Paul refers to, Gal. ii. they were directed to take this step by the Spirit of God, since he there says that he went up to Jerusalem by, or in consequence of, a revelation. They were accompanied by some brethren, and in every place where they found believers, they comforted them with the account of their late progress. At Jerusalem they were cordially received; and, having declared the happy fruits of their preaching to the Heathens, though they had not attempted to bind them to the Mosaic law, they proceeded to declare the tenet which had been lately advanced, and their motives for opposing it. They soon found persons of the same legal spirit, who justified and repeated the obligation of the ceremonial law upon all who embraced the Gospel. Upon this, a particular day was named for the whole assembly to meet and discuss the question. In this convention there was the highest room to expect that the Spirit of God would influence their resolves, and guard them from giving their sanction to an error, and he did so; yet not by an audible voice or instantaneous impulse, but by presiding over their debates, and enabling them, in the conclusion, to collect and pronounce the true state of the question with infallible evidence and certainty. Here again it is plain that Peter little thought himself entitled to that supreme prerogative, as the immediate Vicar of Jesus Christ, which his pretended successors falsely ascribed to him; nor did his brethren remind him of the privilege, otherwise there could have been no debate, for his declaration would have been decisive; but, waving the claim of authority, he argued the insignificance of the Jewish rites as to salvation, from the Lord's conduct towards Cornelius and his friends, by his ministry. These were the first Gentile converts, and in this instance, he said, the Lord had fully declared his mind, making no difference between Jew and Gentile, purifying their hearts by faith in his blood, and imparting to them those substantial blessings, of which the ceremonial law exhibited no more than the shadow; and which, in comparison of the liberty of the Gospel, he termed an unnecessary yoke, too heavy to

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be borne. The assembly then kept silence, while Paul and Barnabas related more at large the fruits of their late mission among the Heathens. The conference was closed, and the determination given, not by Peter, but by James, who asserted the Gentiles' freedom from the Jewish yoke, and enjoined them only to abstain from fornication, from things offered to idols, and from blood. The two latter points were necessary, to preserve a friendly intercourse between the Gentiles and Jewish converts, so long as these were indulged in observing the Levitical institutions; and the prohibition from fornication, though immediately belonging to the moral law, which was of universal obligation, was added, to give the Gentiles a deeper sense of the guilt and evil of a practice which the most civilized and virtuous Heathens considered as almost, if not wholly innocent.

This sentence was generally embraced; and a letter to the same effect was written to the believers at Antioch, confirming them in their Christian liberty. In this they thought it a sufficient condemnation of the opposite opinion to say, they had given no such commandment: a protestation the apostles might have often repeated, had they lived to this day; but since their genuine writings still subsist, we may, by parity of reason, still infer, that we need not be afraid of rejecting any thing that is enjoined as binding upon the conscience, if we can be sure that the apostles, who were divinely inspired to explain the Christian faith and practice, have given us no precept in its favour. They likewise took care to assert their firm persuasion that their decision was agreeable to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. This convocation has generally been styled the *first* Christian council; but, indeed, when we compare it with those which bore the same name afterwards, and were professedly formed upon this precedent, we shall be almost tempted to say, it was not only the *first*, but the *last*. Here were no intrigues practised, no temporal interests consulted, no fierce and bloody anathemas issued to give a sanction to persecution, no uncertainty or animosity in the issue; but the affair was conducted with freedom and moderation, and the conclusion made by general consent, and to the satisfaction of both parties: how different in these respects, from the spirit of after times! But though this answered the end in the present case, the judgment of the apostles was not entirely obeyed, even while they lived. This debate was revived in other places, and proved a frequent impediment to the peace of the church, so long, at least, as the temple and worship of Jerusalem continued, and gave St. Paul an occasion to write his epistle to the Galatians expressly on this subject. Nay, it seems, the mistake still subsisted in Judea, though none publicly ventured to contradict the decree when it was made. For

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when, some time after, Peter went to Antioch, and conversed* freely with the Gentile converts, living after their manner for a season; yet, when some brethren came down from Jerusalem, he was so fearful to offend them in this matter, that he separated himself again; and, by his influence, prevailed on Barnabas likewise to dissemble in favour of those of the circumcision. For this weak compliance, whereby he seemed to overthrow what he had before established, St. Paul withstood him to his face. He did not detract from his character, by insinuations to his prejudice behind his back, nor did he content himself with reproving him in secret; but, as their offence was public, tending to confirm the Jews in their bigotry, and to offend the weak on both sides, he boldly and publicly rebuked him before them all. Strange weakness, incident to the best of men, that Peter, who had first laid aside his prejudices, who had visited the Gentiles by divine direction, had seen the happy effects of his compliance, and vindicated his own conduct so unanswerably upon a late occasion, should now shrink and trifle, expose himself, and grieve his brethren, through fear of those who came from Jerusalem! To be delivered from the fear of man is a deliverance indeed! It was happy for Peter that he had, in his brother Paul, a faithful friend, who, by a few well-timed words broke the chain, and set him at liberty. It is surprising that any who have read this passage should dream of fixing on Peter, above any other of the apostles, to be the supreme and infallible head of the Christian church.

Justus and Silas, two of the brethren, were sent with Barnabas and Paul, to accompany the letter, and to declare the purport of it more at large. They were gladly received at Antioch, and not only confirmed the peace of the church, but were further helpful to their faith, by the singular gifts by which the Lord had honoured them. In a little time Justus returned to Jerusalem; but Silas chose to continue longer, and was afterwards the constant companion of St. Paul in his travels.

A. D. 50.] This obstacle being removed, the Gospel flourished greatly at Antioch. But, amidst all their services and success there, Paul and Barnabas could not forget the converts they had left in Cyprus and Asia Minor; they proposed, therefore, to make them a second visit, to comfort them, and to see how the work had prospered in their absence. But a difficulty was started concerning John, surnamed Mark, who had formerly left them at Perga, and, having probably repented of his irresolution was now desirous to proceed with them again. Paul warmly opposed this, thinking him highly culpable for his inconstancy, and,

*Gal. ii. 11.

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perhaps, too much influenced against him by a spirit of resentment not wholly excusable. On the other hand, Barnabas undertook his apology; in which, besides his tenderness to his fault, he seems to have been moved by considerations which ought to have no place where the service of God is concerned. John was his sister's son, and this led him to consider his conduct in the most favourable light. Thus they were both a little partial in the cause, but much more wrong in the issue; for the contention became so sharp between them that it broke their harmony. They determined to part: accordingly Barnabas took Mark, (whose company he had dearly purchased by the loss of Paul's,) and sailed to Cyprus, his native place; and Paul, choosing Silas in his room, went through Syria and Cicilia, being recommended to the Lord by the prayers of the brethren. So that their former work was now divided between them.

I must venture to digress here a little, for the sake of two remarks, of which the course of our history may often remind the reader. 1. How small an occasion will discover human infirmity, even in the brightest characters! Not all the graces of Paul and Barnabas, nor the remembrance of the services and difficulties they had jointly experienced, nor the importance of the common cause in which they were engaged, nor the fear of giving offence to the world and to the church, could restrain these dear friends, fellow-labourers, and fellow-sufferers, from contending and separating about a trifle. 2. How wise is the over-ruling providence of God, permitting such things for the trial of some, the instruction of others, and the better carrying on his own designs! In succeeding revivals of religion, the like differences* have sometimes taken place among the main instruments, and from as trivial causes; and though they have not obtained without fault in some, and inconvenience to many, yet the event has proved them no hindrance upon the whole. The work has become more diffusive, and more incontestable, when persons of different tempers, sentiments, and talents, who seemed, to superficial observers, as the heads of different parties, have laboured with equal zeal and success in advancing the one great design of the Gospel. As a skilful gardener raises many plants in a little spot of ground, and removes them afterwards to places where they will have more room to grow and flourish, so they, who are

*To mention only one by anticipation—the unhappy dispute between Luther and Zuinglius, and their respective followers, concerning the words, 'This is my body.' The difference between them was little more than imaginary; but the mischiefs it occasioned were real, important, and numerous, and would, probably, have stifled the Reformation in its birth, if it had not been so remarkably under an Almighty protection.

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designed for extensive usefulness, are often first reared within a little compass, within the sight and knowledge of each other, where they are sheltered and strengthened, while tender, by their mutual advices, prayers, and examples, and seem to have only one heart and one mind; but were they always to continue thus closely connected, no one would have room to expand according to the measure of gifts and services which the Lord has appointed them; therefore they are thinned and transplanted: either persecutions from without, or weakness, mistakes, or jealousies among themselves, scatter them afar to places and undertakings they had no thoughts of, and which would not have been otherwise attempted.

The apostle Paul, with his companion* Silas, proceeded (as has been mentioned) through Syria and Cilicia, to the parts he had formerly visited. When he came to Lystra, he chose Timothy for his associate and companion in his journey, who, it is probable had been converted by his ministry, and a witness to his sufferings for the Gospel when he was there before. Timothy was of Jewish extraction by the mother's side, and carefully educated, from his infancy, in the knowledge of the Scriptures; but his father was a Greek. This circumstance being generally known to the Jews, and likely to render him less acceptable among them, Paul, to obviate their prejudices, directed him to be circumcised; thus showing his readiness to become all things to all men, so far as was consistent with a good conscience, and conducive to edification; for though, when the observance of the Mosaic law was insisted on as necessary to salvation, he steadily opposed it, and would not admit the least addition to the doctrine of free justification by the blood of Christ, he was willing to permit it to the Jewish converts in their present situation, and to accomodate himself to their weakness, for their advantage. He had before withstood the circumcision of Titus, (who was a Gentile,) when it was urged as a necessary point; but now that debate was settled in favour of Gospel liberty, he proposed the circumcision of Timothy himself. The seeming inconsistence of his conduct vanishes, if the difference of the two cases is rightly understood: but those who act from the most enlarged principles, who know when and in what points resolution is necessary, and when and how far it is expedient to yield to others, will always be thought inconstant and inconsistent by the zealots of parties. In the course of his progress he delivered, in every city, the decree lately determined in Jerusalem; which, though primarily directed to Antioch, was of equal force, as a rule and bond

* Acts xvi.

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of peace, in all places where there were both Jewish and Gentile converts. Thus having watered his former planting, he proceeded to preach in Phrygia and Galatia. The route of the Gospel was directed by the Spirit of God, who restrained the apostle from entering the province which is called, by way of distinction, the Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital; not that this country was to be excluded from the knowledge of Christ, for St. Paul preached in many* parts of it afterwards with great success; but the proper season was not yet come, the Lord having an important service for them first in another place. For the same reason, and by the same influence, they were prevented going into Bithynia, which they had some thoughts of attempting. Thus, in a manner undetermined where they were to labour, they came to Troas, a sea-port in the Archipelago: and when their journey was now bounded by the sea, they received a further intimation of the Lord's will, and found that he had been leading them in the right way, for they were brought to a port proper for embarking to the place where the Lord had designed to send them.

A. D. 51.] Here St. Paul had a vision, by night, of a man standing by him, whose garb and expression intimated his country, and entreating him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. This vision was attended with such circumstances, as left no room to doubt either its origin or meaning; so that, when he had communicated it to his companions, they assuredly collected that the Lord called them into Macedonia. Accordingly they took shipping, and having a favourable wind, they soon arrived at Neapolis; from whence they proceeded by land to Philippi, a place of note, and a Roman colony. Their preaching and continuance in this city, which, in time, became the seat of a flourishing church, was productive of several interesting and important events.

On the sabbath day, they went out of the city, to a place by the river side, (a usual resort of the Jews for the exercise of public prayer,) where, meeting with some women, (as it should seem,) before the rest were assembled, they spake freely of the great subject which was always uppermost in their hearts and mouths. One of them, named Lydia, a native of Thyatira, and then resident at Philippi, gave a peculiar attention to St. Paul's discourse: the reason is assigned; the Lord opened her heart. The rest heard the same words; but the hearts of all are dull, contracted, and averse to spiritual truths; so that, without a divine interposition, the most powerful speakers speak in vain. Lydia heard to

*See Acts xix. 10.

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good purpose; she believed, and was immediately baptized, with her family, and gladly received the messengers of Gospel grace into her house.

Continuing to preach in this place so long as they remained at Philippi, they were often met by a young woman under the influence of an evil spirit, who, as they passed by, cried after them, These men are the servants of the Most High God, who declare unto us the way of salvation: in like manner as the demoniacs had sometimes confessed our Saviour's authority and mission. It may seem strange that an evil spirit should testify in favour of the preachers of the Gospel; but, perhaps, it was either to make them suspected of a confederacy, or to draw them into a snare. However, when this had been often repeated, St. Paul, who could not bear to be spoken well of by a spirit which was not of God, commanded him, in the name of Jesus, to quit his possession. The spirit, compelled to obey, left the woman instantly; but this opened a way to give them disturbance in another manner. Her masters, to whom she had formerly brought great profit by her divining talent, finding she was no longer willing or able to procure them advantage by that means, apprehended Paul and Silas, as the chief instruments of their loss, and brought them before the magistrates, with the heavy charge, (which is usually revived when the preaching of the Gospel interferes with the views of interest,) that they exceedingly disturbed the peace of the city, by attempting innovations contrary to the established religion; they styled them Jews to the Romans, on account of their open abhorrence of idol worship, which was carefully supported by the Roman laws and customs. The unthinking multitude soon joined in the alarm; and the magistrates, easily prejudiced by the terms of the accusation, instead of acting as impartial judges, declared themselves parties in the affair. Without examining into particulars, they violently tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas, and having caused them to be beat with many stripes, they cast them into prison, giving the jailer a particular charge to keep them safely. This command was executed with severity; he thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But no walls or dungeons can exclude those comforts of God's Spirit, which are promised to those who suffer for righteousness sake, and which are able to overpower the sense of every inconvenience. Paul and Silas were so little discomposed by this cruel treatment, that they joyfully sung hymns of praise to God, and were heard by the other prisoners; who, probably, were surprised at the cheerfulness they expressed in such circumstances. But they were surprised much more at the testimony the Lord immediately gave in behalf of his

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servants: for, while they were thus engaged, on a sudden the earth trembled; the very foundations of the prison were shaken, so that all the doors flew open, and every one's fetters and bonds were instantly loosed. The noise awakened the jailer; who, supposing the prisoners were all escaped, and dreading the consequences, in the first transports of his terror, drew his sword to slay himself; for so the false wisdom of the Heathens, ignorant of the awful realities beyond the grave, taught men to avoid the pressure of present troubles by desperately plunging themselves into an unknown eternity. But St. Paul, though in another part of the prison, and in the dark, was made acquainted with his purpose, and called out to him, with a loud voice, 'Do thyself no harm, we are all here!' It increased his surprise to find that his design was made known to them, and that those whom he had treated so hardly should forget all their wrongs, and interest themselves in his preservation. Such an instance of forgiveness and tenderness to an enemy deeply affected him, and convinced him of the wrong he had done them, more forcibly than the sharpest expostulations could have done. This is, indeed, the peculiar triumph of a Christian, to overcome evil with good. He immediately called for lights, and, in agony of guilt and terror, sprung in, and cast himself at the feet of those over whom he had so lately tyrannized. After this expression of his respect and compunction for the injury he had done them, he brought them out, and addressed them with that question, of the last importance to every awakened soul, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Paul and Silas, who had but one answer to this question, suited to every rank of life, and to sinners of every degree, directed him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only and infallible means of salvation. This faith the Lord was pleased to give; so that, when he had brought them to his house, and heard them explain the doctrine more at large, he believed, and was baptized, with all his family. Upon this, his sorrow was turned into permanent joy; and now it appeared why the Lord had permitted his servants to be thus rudely handled. Amongst other reasons, it was on the account of this jailer, who would otherwise have remained a stranger to the Gospel, if the Lord, in the unsearchable riches of his mercy, had not thus sent it to him, and, by the concurrent dispensations of his providence, disposed him to receive it with thankfulness, as life from the dead. It likewise proved the vanity of all attempts to suppress the truth. The magistrates and people abused the preachers, and put them in prison; but the effect was quite contrary to their intentions; for by this means the jailer, the instrument of their cruelty, with his household, were converted; and thus the apostle's enemies, through the overru-

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ling hand of God, became subservient to his design, and helped him to some of the first members of his new church.

The jailer, thus made partaker of the faith, expressed his gratitude to his prisoners; he washed their stripes, and set meat before them, and was soon freed from any suspense on their account; for, in the morning, the magistrate sent him orders to dismiss them from confinement. But St. Paul was willing to let them know that they had failed in their duty, and acted against those very laws and customs, of which, as Romans, they professed to be so tenacious. A citizen of Rome was not liable to bonds or scourging, and a subject of Rome, though not a citizen, could not be legally punished till he had been permitted to answer his accusers face to face, (Acts xxv. 16.) The apostle was injured in both these respects; they had punished him without trial, and they had bound and beat him, though he was a Roman: he therefore asserted his privilege. He might have insisted on satisfaction; but he was a Christian, a willing disciple of a suffering Saviour; he had been once a persecutor himself, and had obtained forgiveness; therefore, he found it easy to forgive. His remonstrance made the magistrates willing to submit to his terms; they came themselves, and honourably dismissed their prisoners, entreating them that, to prevent further inconveniences, they would withdraw from the city; which they did, after they had taken leave of Lydia and the other disciples.

A. D. 52.] From hence, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, the residence of the Roman governor. Here Paul, according to his usual custom, applying himself first to the Jews, discoursed and *reasoned* with them in their synagogue three successive sabbaths, out of their own Scriptures, opening* the true sense of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and then showing their accomplishment in the person of Jesus. His labour was not wholly in vain; some of them believed and became disciples; but the rest, and the greater part, discovered the indignation and enmity of their hearts against the truth. Under such leaders, the unthinking rabble are easily instigated to do mischief, so that they found no difficulty to raise a tumultuous mob, who assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul

*Acts xvii. 3. 'Opening and alleging:' first explaining the true sense of the passage, and then laying down plain and undeniable deductions from it, applicable to the case in hand. Thus much is implied in the Greek words Διανοιγων και παρατιθεμενος. A proper model for preachers, and writers in divinity. How many controversies would cease, how much time would be redeemed, how many offences would be avoided, if it was universally followed; if the Scriptures were explained in their true sense and connexion, and nothing advanced but what could be fairly deduced from such an explanation?

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and Silas resided; but not finding them there, they forced away Jason, and some of the new believers, before the magistrates. The accusation was, that the preachers of the Gospel, who from the effect of their doctrine in disturbing the false peace of sin, began to be sufficiently described, when spoken of, as* men who turned the world upside down, and threw all into confusion wherever they appeared, were come thither also; that Jason had received and countenanced them: and that their fundamental tenets were inconsistent with obedience to government, since they professed and inculcated subjection to one Jesus, whom they styled their king. By such misrepresentations the enemies of the Gospel doctrine have often aimed to render it obnoxious to the civil powers. The rulers were alarmed at this accusation; but, being unwilling to proceed to extremities, though obliged to take some notice of what seemed to affect the interest of Cæsar, they took sufficient security of Jason and the rest for their good behaviour, and dismissed them without further trouble. In the mean time Paul and Silas, against whom the violence had been chiefly intended, were sent safely away by the brethren to Berea; where, regardless of their past dangers and sufferings, they pursued their endeavours to recommend the Gospel to the Jews; and in this place they met with a friendly reception. It is said the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica; for to be open to conviction and information is the mark of a noble mind: they were of a more free and ingenuous temper, not slaves to the fear of man or the power of prejudice; they heard with candour, and examined the Scriptures themselves to find the truth. The Gospel of Christ is suited to give the fullest satisfaction to inquirers of this spirit; accordingly many of them believed. But when the Jews of Thessalonica were informed of this, they followed Paul thither, with a view to repeat the part they had acted in their own city; but they came too late. Paul had already planted the Gospel, and leaving Silas and Timothy, who were less obnoxious, to remain a little longer with the brethren, he was conducted first towards the sea, to elude the attempts of his enemies, and afterwards to Athens, a city, which, for its eminence in literature and all the polite arts, was styled, by general consent, *The seat of the Muses.*

* It is still thought a sufficient and unanswerable objection against the preaching of the Gospel, to say, These opinions cause divisions and separations, and break the peace of families and communities. We may bring the point to a short issue. Did our Lord foretel this as one sure and perpetual consequence that would attend the prevalence of his Gospel, or did he not? If he did not, what is the meaning of Matt. x. 34—36? If he did, then by what name are we to call that manner of preaching which has either no tendency or no power to disturb the false and dangerous peace of a wicked world?

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While the apostle waited at Athens for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, his spirit was inflamed with a lively concern for the honour of God and the welfare of souls. It grieved him to see a city so famed for refinement and philosophy, wholly given to idolatry; and, with respect to the most important concerns of life, quite upon a level with the most ignorant barbarians. St. Paul is generally allowed, by those who will allow him little else, to have been a man of taste and letters. He was now at Athens, the school of philosophy, and centre of the fine arts: painting, statuary, architecture, and elegance, appeared in every quarter; but the affecting observation he had made of the state of the inhabitants, so filled his mind, that he could take little notice of any thing else. To those who understand the nearness and importance of an eternal state, the highest improvements of unsanctified reason afford little more entertainment than the trivial sports of children, or the more wretched amusements of lunatics. He was so struck with the ignorance, superstition, and wickedness of the people, that he could relish none of the beauties of the place; but, full of a different emotion, compassionately laboured to inspire them with true wisdom. He was soon encountered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, the respective advocates for those principles of pleasure and pride, to one or the other of which all men are enslaved, till the Gospel sets them free. Here, in some measure, accommodating himself to the prevailing taste, he reasoned with the reasoners, and silenced the wise men of the world, in their own way, by dint of argument: but the contest was unequal; their syllogisms soon failed them, and they were forced to retreat to their last refuge, and affected wit and raillery. Unable to answer the force of his discourses, they triumphed without a victory, and expressed their contempt of him and his doctrine by a word of the lowest and most despicable signification, which our version not improperly renders, *a babbler;* but perhaps no term in our language can sufficiently express the poignancy of the original. Others so entirely mistook the state of the question, that they thought he was a publisher or setter forth of strange gods. They thought that Jesus and the resurrection were deities they had not before heard of; and his discourse always turning upon these topics, they concluded (indeed with reason) that his only business and desire was to proclaim to all, the Divinity whom he worshipped. And it is no wonder, that, from a half-attention to his words, they should be induced to personify the Resurrection as a deity, since the Heathens had altars erected not only to Honour, Virtue, and Liberty, but to the vices and disorders of human nature, such as Fear, Shame, Famine, and Fevers.

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This weak mistake gave occasion to summon him before the council who bore the name of Areopagus, or the Hill of *Mars*, from the place where they met; an assembly in high estimation for authority and wisdom, and whose particular office it was to superintend the public religion, and preserve it from innovation. It does not appear, however, that he underwent a formal trial before them. His opponents seemed rather disposed to gratify their curiosity than their malice; their politeness, perhaps, made them something averse to the severer forms of persecution, and content with the less invidious (though to many not less formidable) methods of scorn and ridicule. Their prevailing passion was the love of novelty; they spent their time in telling or hearing some new, or, as the Greek expresses it, some newer thing. The expected news lost its relish the moment it was known, and they were always in search of something *newer still;* therefore, the Gospel, though the strangest, as well as the most important news they had ever met with, could not engage such volatile minds; while it was the newer thing, the freshest news, they were content to listen, but as soon as they were satisfied what it was, they wanted to hear something else. The apostle no where met with so little success as amongst this polite, learned, ignorant people; and wherever this Athenian spirit prevails, it retards the success of the Gospel more than all the arts and violence of persecution.

The discourse of the apostle on this occasion, is equally a standard of fine address and of just reasoning. He had observed their religious rites and worship with attention, and had selected from among their numerous altars the one which was most fit for his purpose. The beauty of his exordium is obscured by the expression, 'too superstitious,' in our version. The Greek word to which it answers is ambiguous, and suited to bespeak a favourable hearing rather than importing an abrupt reproof; *q. d.* 'I perceive, indeed, Athenians, that you are observant of the invisible powers in an unusual manner, for, besides the variety of temples and altars which you have in common with other cities of Greece, I observed one with a peculiar inscription—'To the unknown God;' this God, as yet unknown to you, is he whom I serve, and the new doctrine of which you ask me, relates to his will and worship.' This was the most happy and pertinent medium to enlarge from that could be imagined. The Athenians, always eager to hear some newer thing, expected an account of new deities, but St. Paul referred them to an altar an inscription among themselves, which, merely by being obvious, had escaped their reflection. It is to be feared that this observation and inscription may suit the devotions of many who think themselves Christians. The same address is visible in his whole argument. To the Jews he

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quoted the books of the Holy Scripture, but with these heathens he appealed to the volume of creation, and argued from the impresses of power, wisdom, and goodness, every where displayed before their eyes, the excellence and independence of their great Author, how little he stood in need of men, and how unworthy of his Divine Majesty all their laborious inventions were, while they thought to honour him by worshipping the works of their own hands: he asserted the providence and omnipresence of God, that he was the fountain of life and all its comforts, the supreme disposer of all events, and the common father of mankind; confirming this part of his doctrine by a quotation from Aratus, one of their own poets. He afterwards proceeded to the topics of revelation, a resurrection to future life, and a final judgment by the man Christ Jesus. It would require too much room to point out particularly the spirit, propriety, and evidence of this short sermon. But no oratory or reasoning can change the heart.—The effect was the same as may be observed amongst ourselves, when much inferior instruments declare the truths of God: some mocked, and accounted this wisdom the merest folly; others, pleased with his *manner*, and perhaps affected with some transient emotions of mind, expressed a willingness to hear him again; and a few, a very few, believed, among whom was Dionysius, one of the Areopagite judges.

Having so little encouragement to prolong his stay at Athens, the apostle proceeded to Corinth, at that time accounted the chief city of Greece. Here he unexpectedly found companions prepared for him.* Aquila, a native of Pontus, by birth a Jew, with Priscilla his wife, had received the faith of the Gospel in Italy, from whence they had been lately constrained to remove by an edict of the emperor, enjoining all Jews to depart from Rome. Whether the Christians were particularly aimed at by the name of Jews in this decree is uncertain; but as their Lord and Master had lived in Judea, and the first preachers and converts were generally of that nation, perhaps, likewise, because they asserted and proved their doctrines from those books for which the Jews professed the highest veneration, the Christians were for some time considered as Jews by most of the Heathens. This happy pair, partners in faith and affection, were led by that Divine Providence which certainly, though secretly, guide the steps of his servants, to seek a retreat in Corinth, about the time St. Paul arrived there. They soon became acquainted, and, of course, intimate. He often mentions them in his writings, as having, upon many occasions, afforded him help and comfort; for, as in na-

*Acts xviii.

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ture, so in grace, none are so sufficient to themselves, but they may be glad of assistance from others, even from such as are in many respects their inferiors. They abode and wrought together, being of the same business; for though St. Paul well understood his liberty, and that, as a preacher of the Gospel, he had a right to expect maintenance from those to whom he ministered, yet he condescended to work, as a common handicraft, at the employment of making tents. One reason of his submitting to this, he informs us himself, was a prudent precaution to obviate any insinuations that might be raised or received against him, of a design to make gain of godliness, or to abuse his influence to mercenary purposes. But his example may further teach us, that secular employments are not in *themselves* incompatible with a faithful and regular discharge of the Gospel ministry, when the circumstances of the times may so require. But his main and proper business, to which he always attended in* season and out of season, was preaching the Gospel of Christ. To this he addressed himself at Corinth, first (as usual) to the Jews, being pressed in spirit, borne on by a constraining sense of the love of Christ and the worth of souls, and probably more confirmed and warmed by the accounts brought by Timothy and Titus, who rejoined him here from Macedonia. Animated, rather than discouraged, by the opposition he had formerly met with, he strenuously urged to the Jews, from their own Scriptures, the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah, with such evidence as must have gained their assent, had they not been hardened and obstinate; but when they persisted in returning contradiction and despite to his repeated labours of love, he at length gave them up, and told them, that having discharged his duty and his conscience, their blood would be upon their own heads, that their guilt was most aggravated, and their destruction approaching; and that, for the future, he would frequent their synagogues no more, but address himself to the Gentiles. He accordingly preached in the house of one Justus, near the synagogue, and though most of the Jews were hardened beyond the reach of conviction, yet the Lord had a small remnant amongst

* 2 Tim. iv. 2. 'Be instant in season and *out of season*;' not unseasonably, as supposing a time in which it would be better to forbear, but *in season*, at set and stated times, and *out of season*, that is, occasionally. Improve every opportunity that offers, not on the Lord's day only, but on any other: not only in a solemn and full discourse, but let the glory of God and the good of souls be your scope in every conversation! It answers to the account the apostle gives of his own conduct; he preached publicly and from house to house, by night and by day, Acts xx. 20. 31. As a physician, besides his ordinary round of practice, is ready to afford his help upon every sudden application, this should be the aim of a Gospel minister; he should be constant to all his stated appointments, and willing to make the most of every unexpected call to service.

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them here likewise. Crispus, a chief ruler or president of the synagogue, believed with all his house; and of the heathens many were converted and baptized.

If Corinth was less celebrated than Athens for philosophy and science, it was more so for riches and luxury, which are no less powerful hindrances to the reception of the truth. This consideration, joined to the violent spirit of his opposers, might perhaps have prompted him to a speedy departure; but the Lord, whom he served, appeared to him in a vision, and bid him not be afraid or discouraged, but continue to preach, assuring him his labour should not be in vain; for, though present appearances might promise but little success, [A. D. 53.] he had many people known to himself in that proud, sensual, idolatrous city. It signifies but little what enemies or difficulties a faithful minister may be threatened with, if the Lord has many people in that place; he who sent him to call them out of darkness into his marvellous light, will support and defend him, so that either none shall rise against him, or at least none be able to prevail to his real harm. That the people whom the Lord here spoke of as his own, were no better, either by nature or practice, than others, is plain from what the apostle reminds them of after their conversion, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. We* learn from the same epistle, that his conflicts and exercises at this time were very great. Supported, however, by such a seasonable and gracious encouragement, he remained there a year and a half; and all the efforts of his enemies were insufficient, either to damp his zeal and activity, or to prevent the success of his labours, though the Lord permitted them to try what they could do, and thereby more clearly showed, that the safety of his servants depends on himself.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achia, (who as it seems by Luke's expression, entered upon his government during the apostle's abode at Corinth,) the Jews appeared tumultuously before the tribunal, with the old accusation, that he subverted the laws of Moses. Gallio prevented Paul's intended defence, and refused to interfere in points foreign to the Roman laws. He said, that if their charge had been laid for any trespass or immorality, he would readily have taken cognizance of the affair, but should leave them to settle their religious disputes between themselves. With this reprimand he dismissed, or rather drove them from his presence. The conduct of Gallio in this affair has been considered in different lights, and praised or censured accordingly. History gives him a fair character for equity and moderation; and it must be allowed he judged right, in refusing to interpose the

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

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civil authority to give sanction to persecution: yet he seems, upon this occasion, to have discovered that political indifference which has prompted so many great and wise men, in the world's estimation, to treat the Gospel as a trivial scheme, unworthy their notice: he rather showed contempt than impartiality; he would not hear either party, because he despised both, and therefore drove them away with scorn. In fine, the Jews not only failed in their design, but were themselves assaulted by some of the inhabitants, who beat Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, even in the open court, and Gallio, though he saw it, cared for none of these things; which is a further proof that he was influenced by some other motives than impartiality and a regard to justice, or he would not have suffered his authority to be insulted, and a person (upon his own principles innocent) abused before his face. I suppose (though it is a controverted point) that the Sosthenes here mentioned, was at that time an enemy to Paul, and joined in the prosecution attempted against him. Perhaps he was afterwards converted, and accompanied the apostle in his travels, as his name is prefixed, with his own, to his first epistle to the Corinthians.

Nero, A. D. 54.] St. Paul, after about two years stay in Greece, from his first landing at Macedonia, embarked at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, intending for Syria. In this voyage they touched at Ephesus, the chief city of the Proper or Proconsular Asia. Here, as in other places, he entered into the Jews' synagogues, desirous, if possible, to lead them to the knowledge of the Messiah. At this city he left his dear companions Aquilla and Priscilla, who would willingly have detained him longer; but St. Paul, having formed the plan of his progress in such manner as he judged most suitable to his main design, readily sacrificed the dictates of affection to the calls of duty, and persisted in his purpose to be at Jerusalem on the approaching passover. He took leave of them, therefore, with a promise of returning at a proper time; and proceeding on his voyage, landed at Cæsarea, from whence he went to Jerusalem. His stay here was not long: having answered the design of his journey, and conversed with the brethren, he revisited the places where he had formerly preached, and went first to Antioch, and from thence through the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. In this circuit he lost no time, but published the glad tidings of salvation, and confirmed the hearts of the disciples, wherever he came.

While he was on this service, there came to Ephesus a Jew of Alexandria, named Apollos. He had been as yet only instructed in the rudiments of the faith, so far as was communicated by the teaching and baptism of John; but though his knowledge was not

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extensive, his zeal was lively and fervent; and, having a prompt elocution, and a great readiness in the Scriptures, he preached concerning Christ with much freedom and earnestness, according to the measure of light he had received. Aquila and Priscilla were amongst his hearers, and having more experience and knowledge than himself, they easily perceived wherein he was deficient, and with candour and tenderness, instructed him further. This passage is worthy the notice both of preachers and hearers. What Apollos had learnt he willingly communicated; what he was yet ignorant of, he as willingly received when proposed to him: his zeal and humility went hand in hand. This is an amiable and thriving character. The man who is faithful to present light, and open to further conviction, will soon be wise and successful; the Lord will provide him both teachers and hearers; he shall profit others, and be profited himself every day. The prudence and moderation of Aquila and Priscilla are no less commendable. They did not acquiesce in all he said, because he was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures; neither did they reject and disdain him because they knew more than he, much less expose and revile him as a low, ignorant preacher; but they spoke to him in private; they approved what was right, and showed him mildly and faithfully wherein he was defective; they commended his zeal, and improved his knowledge. With these advantages, and letters of recommendation to the brethren, he went from thence to Corinth, where he was highly serviceable to the church, publicly maintaining, and proving, against the Jews, with great earnestness of spirit and strength of argument, that Jesus was the Messiah.

Not long after his departure,* Paul, having completed his progress through the upper or interior parts of Asia Minor, returned, according to his promise, to Ephesus. Here he found some more disciples, who, like Apollos, though acquainted with the doctrine and baptism of John, were hitherto strangers to those peculiar gifts, graces, and comforts, which, as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, were bestowed on the believers in Jesus; but, by the imposition of the apostle's hands, they were immediately made partakers of the same benefits.

A. D. 55.] The apostle, unwilling to give up his own people, the Jews, continued his labours of love among them for three months, if, by any means, he might bring them to the acknowledgement of the truth; but at length perceiving that, instead of yielding, they hardened themselves still more, and obstinately laboured to traduce and defame the Author and way of salvation

* Acts xix.

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before the people, he finally desisted; and, selecting those who had received the Gospel from the many who might hinder and confuse them, he formed them into a society among themselves. He continued daily to preach and defend the Gospel for two years afterwards, in a public school, with indefatigable zeal and diligence, seconding his more stated services with occasional and pressing exhortations from house to house, and watering the seed with many prayers and tears. His labours were not in vain; he had great success, not only in the city of Ephesus, but amongst many, who, resorting thither from other parts, and with different views, were providentially led to hear him; and being divinely convinced themselves, carried home the joyful tidings with them; so that the knowledge of the Gospel was generally spread throughout the province. The attention of the people was still further excited, and their prejudices softened, by the numerous displays and visible tendency of that divine power by which the Lord confirmed the words of his servant. Many striking miracles, emblematical of the healing efficacy of Gospel grace, were wrought by the most inconsiderable means; so that persons afflicted with various maladies, or possessed by evil spirits, were perfectly restored to health, by the application of handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body.

Among the various methods by which the Gospel has been opposed, one is, by a feeble imitation, and a pretended acknowledgment, of some of its principles, while the heart is unacquainted or unaffected with the design and scope of the whole doctrine. Enmity, or, at best, interest, is often the spring of many attempts that are veiled under a fair profession of good words; but such attempts will always issue in the disappointment or confusion of those who venture on them. An instance of this kind happened at Ephesus. Some vagrant Jews, who made claim to a power of exercising or dispossessing evil spirits, struck with the miracles wrought in the name of Jesus, presumed to adopt this sacred name into the number of their professed mysteries; and, meeting with a subject for the exercise of their art, they undertook to adjure the evil spirit to depart from a man, by the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. But the man, under the influence of the evil spirit, insulted and exposed them: he acknowledged the authority of Jesus and the fidelity of Paul; but, demanding further who they were that durst make free with these names, far from obeying their summons, he fiercely assaulted them, and forced them, though seven in number, to flee for their lives, naked, wounded, and terrified. Great indeed is the power of the name of Jesus; but when not pronounced by faith, is spoken in vain: Satan laughs at such vain pretenders, and prevails against them.

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So, when those who are destitute of faith undertake to write or preach concerning Jesus, it will seldom prove to more purpose than if they attempted to exercise the people. Instead of delivering others from the power of Satan, they are more and more subjected to him themselves; and, unless the grace of God interposes to teach them better, their latter end is usually worse than their beginning.

This public defeat of the enemy added to the triumph of the Gospel and the honour of the apostle, and produced a reverence and awe in the hearts of many, convincing them of the power of evil spirits when not restrained, and the danger of trifling with the name or ministry of Christ; and many who had been addicted to the magic arts (for which Ephesus was peculiarly infamous) renounced their delusions, confessed their folly and wickedness to the apostle, made public profession of the Gospel, and, in proof that their faith and repentance were sincere, brought the books containing the secrets and principles of their pretended skill, and publicly committed them to the flames. These were either so numerous, or so dear, that the value was computed at fifty thousand pieces of silver. What this sum might be in our money the learned are not agreed; the lowest calculations fix it at about fifteen hundred pounds, while some compute it at more than seven thousand. We are not, however, sure they were all on the subject of magic: a variety of other disquisitions might possibly contribute to enlarge the pile. Curious books and curious arts had been multiplied; but the one book of truth now made the rest useless and tasteless. They had now found the pearl of great price, and willingly parted with their once-admired pebbles; and we may believe, that if the worth and power of the holy Scriptures were once generally known, many curious libraries in our days, if they escaped unburnt, would, at least, remain unread and unnoticed. When the wise thus renounced their wisdom, and the artful their gain, burnt their books with their own hands, and devoted themselves to the study of the Scriptures alone, it is once more observed, 'So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed!'

A. D. 57.] The apostle, of whom it may be said, with more propriety than of Cæsar, that he accounted nothing done while any thing remained to do, in the midst of his important engagements at Ephesus was still meditating new services. He retained a warm affection and care for his friends in different, distant, and opposite quarters. He had thoughts of revisiting Macedonia and Greece, and, from thence, once more to go to Jerusalem; and, not content with reviewing his past labours, he longed to preach in places he had not yet seen—saying, 'After I have been there,

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I must also see Rome :' nor was Rome the boundary of his views, for from thence he proposed to proceed to Spain.* We are taught from our infancy to admire those who, in the language of the world, are styled great captains and conquerors, because they burned with a desire to carry slaughter and terror into every part of the globe, and to aggrandize their names by the depopulation of countries, and the destruction of their species, while this generous spirit of St. Paul is almost totally overlooked. Unwearied by difficulties, undismayed by dangers, unsatisfied with the greatest success, unaffected with the justest applause, he seemed to lay his benevolent schemes wide as the human race. He reaped no profit, he sought no praise, he rejected the allurements of pleasure, (to which the greatest conquerors have often been irresolute slaves,) he endured the reproach and contempt of the people, which no hero but the true Christian was ever strong enough to bear with patience, and all this only to make others partakers of the happiness which he enjoyed himself. However, finding it necessary to continue some time longer where he was, he dispatched his beloved Timothy to Macedonia, to apprise his friends of his intention, and to prepare them for his visit, when a proper opportunity should permit.

In the mean time, an incident fell out, which well illustrates the causes and genius of that opposition and outcry which is usually made when the power of Gospel-truth interferes with the passions and interests of designing men. St. Paul's great success, and the additions daily made to the church of Christ, had a visible tendency to lessen the estimation and gain of those whose chief resource was in the ignorance and wickedness of the people. These were not backward to take the alarm, and had been waiting an opportunity to show their resentment. The Lord, who holds all hearts in his own hands, had restrained them hitherto, that his work of grace might not be disturbed; but when the apostle was on the point of his departure, this restraint was in some measure taken off. The temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was celebrated for its magnificence far and near, so that many shrines or models of it were made for sale, and in much demand. This branch of business brought a considerable gain to the silversmiths and other mechanics; but if the Gospel of Christ continued to spread, it was highly probable that these, with many other such toys, would be little inquired after. Demetrius, a leading man amongst them, convening his brethren and dependents, and as many as he could whose interest seemed most immediately affected by this novel doctrine, harangued them with

* Rom. xv. 24.

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much address and influence on a point in which they had so near and mutual a concern. He reminded them, with a seasonable frankness, that their gain was at stake:* this was the main argument; yet, as one not wholly governed by mercenary views, he expressed a very tender concern for the honour of Diana, lest her worship and their advantage should cease together, as they certainly would, if this Paul should be peaceably suffered to persuade the people that they can be no gods which are made with hands. An appeal to the two prevailing passions of mankind, interest and superstition, is seldom made in vain. The arguments of Demetrius have been employed a thousand times over against the Gospel, though all opposers have not had his honesty, in avowing their leading motive. The doctrine which discountenances folly and wickedness will certainly be defamed and resisted by all who find their account in promoting them; but as this motive is rather invidious, if insisted on alone, they express, likewise, an earnest zeal for whatever tenets have the sanction of authority, antiquity, or custom, with which their private interest is inseparably connected. He had said enough to inflame his hearers; and these were sufficiently numerous to stimulate the unthinking rabble, who, though quiet till they are headed by artful leaders, are easily roused to rage and tumult when thus influenced, as the sea, that has been long calm, obeys the impulse of the rising gale. The outcry begun by Demetrius and his companions, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians,' was soon resounded through the city, and the multitude, being informed that their established religion, their stately temple, and costly rites, were all in danger, rushed from all parts tumultuously into the public theatre, dragging two of St. Paul's dear companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, along with them, perhaps with a design to throw them to the wild beasts, which were kept for the barbarous diversion of the people at their public games. The apostle, warmly concerned for his friend's safety, and confiding in the goodness of his cause, and the providence of his God, was not intimidated by this violent uproar, but purposed to face the enraged mob; but the earnest solicitations of the disciples, who could not but be anxious for the event, restrained him; and even some who had not received his doctrine, from a regard to what they knew of his character and conduct, employed their endeavours to pre-

*This is the main objection against the Gospel, though pretexts are industriously sought to hide it. It alarms those who thrive by the ignorance or wickedness of the times; gain is the motive, the honour of Diana the plea. But it may be easily proved, that such occupations as are endangered by the success of the Gospel, are in themselves injurious to the peace and good order of civil society.

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serve him. These, in the text, are styled Asiarchs, persons of note, who presided in the regulation of the games. Some of them sent to inform him, that in the present confusion it was not in their power to protect him from violence, and therefore desired he would keep in safety. Though his resolution was not shaken, yet, judging this might be a providential intimation, that it was not his duty at that time to expose himself, he desisted. The mob, thus disappointed with respect to him, and secretly restrained from hurting the others, continued in the utmost confusion, though few knew why they were assembled, unless it was to join in the cry, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians,' which they repeated, without intermission, for two hours. When they had thus exhausted themselves, and their passions, through weariness, began to subside, a public officer of the city seized the favourable moment to expostulate with them concerning their behaviour. He spoke with freedom and address, but with that indifference which the wise men of the world so frequently discover in religious concerns. Many deserve commendation for their readiness to allow others the peaceable possession of their own sentiments, who, at the same time, call for our pity, that they have no inclination or leisure to inquire for themselves. He allowed, in general terms, the honours of Diana, and pleaded in behalf of the men, that they had not spoke against Diana in particular, or intermeddled with her temple.* This was probably true in fact. St. Paul declared the folly of idolatry in general; but did not enter into direct confutation of any detached part of the Heathen mythology: he proposed the plain truth of the Gospel, and when this was received, the whole system of idol worship fell to the ground of itself. He further reminded them, that if they had any just cause of complaint, they ought to seek redress in a course of law;† and then hinting at the consequences they were liable to, if called to a strict account‡ for their riot, he prevailed on them to separate and depart quietly. Thus the apostle, though threatened with a most imminent and formidable danger,

*'Are neither robbers of churches,' ver. 37. should rather be rendered *robbers of temples*; for though the word church is now expressive of some particular places of worship, it is never, in the New Testament, applied to buildings, but to persons only.

†The servants of Christ will seldom be compelled to answer for themselves in a course of law, except in those places where sanguinary laws are contrived purposely against them. In default of these, their adversaries will often stoop to appeal from the magistrate to the mob.

‡It seems, however, there was no more said of it. It had been a notorious breach of the peace; but then it had been against St. Paul and his companions, who had sufficient favour shown them if they came off with their lives. In any other case, such a tumult would have been deemed a high offence.

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was preserved unhurt, and suffered neither in his person nor character. An encouraging proof, that those who act in the path of duty, and depend on the power of God, are equally safe in all times and circumstances; no less safe when surrounded by enraged enemies, than when encircled by kind and assiduous friends.

He did not continue long at Ephesus after this tumult; but, taking leave of the disciples, he went to Troas, and from thence (as he had purposed) to Macedonia.* We have but little account of this progress in the history of the Acts; but from some passages of his epistles,† written about that time, we are informed that his exercises and trials, both inward and outward, were very great. His solicitous affection for the churches was far from being the smallest source of his troubles, and cost him many‡ a pang: he loved them in the bowels of Jesus Christ; he could willingly have devoted his labours and life to each of them, but he could not be with them all; and knowing the weakness of the heart, the subtilty of Satan, and the obvious temptations arising from the fear of man, the love of the world, and the arts of false teachers, he was jealous over those from whom he was absent with a godly jealousy.§ At Troas he expected to have met with Titus, on his return from Macedonia; but missing him, though he had favourable opportunities of preaching the Gospel at‖ Troas, his mind was not at liberty to improve them, but he hasted to be in Macedonia, that he might the sooner be satisfied. There he tells us himself, he had no rest, but was troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears; but he speaks of it as a seasonable and gracious interposition of that God, whose character¶ and prerogative it is to be a comforter of those that are cast down; that in these circumstances he was comforted by the coming of Titus, who relieved his fears by the favourable account he brought him from Corinth.

A. D. 58.] How long he staid in these parts we are not told, but, in general, that he spent some time, and visited many places; and it seems to have been in this circuit that he preached at Il-

* Acts xx. † 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. and vii. 5.

‡ See 2 Cor. xi. 28. 'That which cometh on me daily.' The word is επισυστασις; and gives the idea of a camp or a castle hard beset with continual onsets and assaults; or a man who has his way to force through a great crowd that are coming to meet him; so that he must not only be much encumbered and hindered, but unless he exerts himself to the utmost, is in danger of being trampled under their feet. By this lively figure the apostle describes the part he took in the welfare of all the churches. His cares on their behalf were so numerous, urgent, and continual, that they found full employment for his prayers, his thoughts, and his time.

§ 2 Cor. xi. 2. ‖ 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

¶ 2 Cor. vii. 6.

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lyricum, a part of which country borders upon Macedonia. He afterwards proceeded to Greece, where he staid three months.—He intended to have embarked from thence at some port, and to have proceeded immediately to Syria by sea; but upon information that his restless enemies, the Jews, were plotting to intercept and kill him, he determined to return through Macedonia. Several of his friends offered to accompany him through Asia, who, embarking before him, waited for him at Troas, where he, at a convenient time, joined them from Philippi, and remained there seven days.

On the first day of the week they had a solemn assembly; and St. Paul, who was to take a long and last farewell of the disciples there the next morning, indulged in his own and their affections, by protracting his discourses and advices beyond the usual bounds: he spent the whole day, even till midnight, in expatiating upon the pleasing topics of redeeming love. This does not, indeed, appear to have been his usual practice; but should a company of believers now spend a night together in the exercise they best love, though it were but once, and when they had no expectation of meeting again till they should meet in glory, it would be sufficient to open the mouths of prejudice and slander against them, as regardless of the order of families, and the duties of common life. Particular notice is taken that they had many lights in the upper chamber where they were met, perhaps to remind us that the first Christians were careful to conduct their assemblies with order and propriety, so as to give no just cause of offence; yet their enemies quickly began to charge them with meeting in the dark, and invented many false and wicked slanders upon that supposition. The like falsehoods have been often repeated. A young man of the company, either less attentive or less warmly engaged than the rest, dropped asleep, and not only lost much of an invaluable opportunity, but fell out of a window in which he was seated, from the third story, and was taken up, to appearance, dead: an incident which might have given those who hated the apostle a further occasion to clamour, and to revile his unseasonable zeal; but he went down, in the spirit of faith and prayer, and embracing the young man, restored him to his friends alive. After they were recovered from the hurry of this event, and had taken some refreshment, he resumed his discourse, and continued in conference* with them till the break of day, when he bid them farewell.

*This, as we have observed, was upon a particular occasion; they expected to see each other no more, and hardly knew how to part. The like circumstances might justify such protracted meetings of Christian friends still; but, in

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His companions went along the coast, by shipping, to Assos, a place not very distant, and to which the apostle chose to go by land, and on foot. Some think, he did this by way of self-denial; but it is not likely that he, who was the great asserter of evangelical and filial liberty, would lay any stress upon such singularities. Self may readily submit to many things of this sort, and derive food, complacence, and strength from them. It is more probable he chose to walk, either that he might embrace occasions of service by the way, or for the advantage of leisure and retirement; for Christians engaged in a very public sphere of life (as he was) are glad to redeem opportunities of being alone, at the price of some inconveniences. But this circumstance is mentioned as characterizing the simplicity of his spirit: though greatly honoured and greatly beloved, he thought it not beneath him to walk from place to place, like an obscure person.

Embarking at Assos, and having touched at Mitylene and Samos, intermediate places, they arrived, in a few days, at Miletus. St. Paul purposely passed Ephesus, that he might not be detained or grieved by the many dear friends he had in that city; for he was resolved, if possible, to be at Jerusalem on the approaching day of Pentecost; but from Miletus he sent for the elders or bishops of the church at Ephesus, to receive his final charge and benediction. When they came, he addressed them in a solemn and affectionate discourse. The substance of it, which is recorded for our instruction, if considered only as a piece of oratory, has been often admired and celebrated by critics: but there are strokes in it, the force and beauty of which no critic can truly relish, except he has tasted of the same spirit which filled and animated the apostle's heart when he spoke it.

He began with an appeal to themselves concerning his conduct while resident among them, and reminded them of the diligence, fidelity, and tenderness, which he had manifested in the course of his ministry; how he had seconded his public instructions with private and repeated exhortations, watering them both with many prayers and tears. He informed them of the object and service of his present journey, and how uncertain he was what the issue might prove to himself. But though he had general intimations from the Spirit of God to expect afflictions and bonds in every place, his determination was fixed: he had counted the cost, and saw that nothing he could meet with was worth his serious thought, so that he might be able to fulfil his ministry with honour, and to

general, they are to be avoided. If frequently indulged, they would break in upon other things, indispose those who attend for the ordinary duties of their station.

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finish his course with joy ;* but this, he said, he was assured of, that the pleasing opportunities he had enjoyed with the believers at Ephesus, and in that neighbourhood, were ended, and that they now saw and heard him for the last time. Only those who know the endeared affection that subsists between a minister of Christ and those to whom God has made him the instrument of saving their souls, can judge of the emotion with which he spoke, and his friends heard, this part of his discourse. When he had thus touched and engaged their tenderest passions, and prepared them to receive his parting solemn charge with a due attention, he exhorted them, in the most animated terms, to follow his example, in performing the part of faithful overseers, or bishops, in the church which he now committed to their care ; suggesting two most powerful motives, the consideration that they were appointed to this office by the Holy Ghost, and that the souls entrusted to them were the church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood. He likewise warned them that the utmost circumspection would be needful ; for that he foresaw that, after his departure, grievous wolves would enter amongst them, not sparing the flock ; and also that, out of their own number of professed disciples, men should arise speaking perverse things. This double danger of false teachers from without, and restless curious spirits within the fold, all societies of Christians are exposed to ; and it is a strong call to ministers, in all ages, to be mindful of the apostle's charge, and to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. He again put them in remembrance of his own conduct, his assiduity and disinterestedness ; that he had not sought his own advantage, but had rather wrought with his own hands, that he might not be chargeable to them. Finally, commending them to God, and the word of his grace, he closed his discourse, with proposing to their consideration an aphorism of our Lord Jesus, and illustrated by the whole tenour of his life : 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' This sentiment, so highly expressive of the spirit of the Divine Author, which had been hitherto preserved in the hearts and mouths of his disciples, was, upon this occasion, inserted into the written word,

* The state of obedience and service which we owe to him who died for us, and rose again, is often compared to a race or course ; by which is intimated the assiduity with which we ought to pursue our calling, the brevity of our labours and sufferings, the little attention we should pay to objects around us, and that our eye and aim should be constantly directed to the prize set before us.—Every step in this race is attended with trouble, but the end will be unspeakable joy. Those to whom the King shall say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord !' will not then complain of the difficulties they met by the way.

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and is the only authentic tradition concerning him which has been transmitted to the church. Having finished his pathetic address he kneeled down and prayed with them. The final farewell was very affecting; for how could those who owed him their souls, who had been so often comforted and edified by his instructions and example, consider that they were to see him no more in this world, without being greatly moved? They accompanied him to the ship, and then returned. The word which Luke the historian makes use of upon this occasion, intimates that the concern was mutual; it signifies, to draw asunder by force, to separate things joined together. 'When we had gotten from them,' or, as it might be rendered, 'When we had torn ourselves from them,' well expresses the close union of their affections, and the sorrow and reluctance which both sides felt at parting.

When this struggle* was over, St. Paul and his company put to sea with a favourable gale, and having touched at Coos and Rhodes, two islands of note in the Ægean sea, continued their course to Patara in Lycia, where they seasonably met with a ship under the point of departure for Phœnicia, and embarking in her, they passed on the south side of Cyprus, and had a safe voyage to Tyre, which being the destined port of the vessel, they landed. As he was now not very far distant from Jerusalem, and had finished that part of his voyage in which he was most exposed to unavoidable delays, by the occurrences of winds and weather, so that he had a fair probability of reaching Jerusalem within his prescribed time, he consented to stay seven days with some disciples† he found there. From some of these he received an intimation, by a prophetic impulse, of the dangers he would be exposed to if he went to Jerusalem; but he knew whom he had believed, and being convinced that his duty called him to persevere, he was not intimidated by a prospect of suffering. At the appointed time he embarked again, the disciples, with their families, accompanying him to the water side, where he took leave of them in an affectionate prayer upon the sea shore.‡ He landed next at Ptolemais, a city of Galilee, and staid one day with the brethren there. The next day he proceeded to Cæsarea, and lodged at

* Acts xxi.

† Ver. 3. Ανευροντες τους μαθητας might be rendered, 'finding out the disciples.' There seems no reason for suppressing the article, and the verb is used for finding out, in consequence of some description or inquiry, Luke ii. 16. We readily suppose, from the apostle's character, that his first inquiry upon coming to any place where the Gospel had been preached, related to those who loved the Lord Jesus, and how they were to be met with.

‡ Could many persons now living have seen this, without doubt they would have said, they had seen a strange company of enthusiasts and fanatics.

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the house of Philip the deacon, who had four daughters endued with the spirit of prophecy.

During his stay at Cæsarea, a prophet named Agabus came down from Jerusalem, and agreeably to the manner of the ancient prophets, who frequently enforced their declarations by expressive signs and actions, he bound his own hands and feet with the apostle's girdle, assuring them, in the name of the Holy Spirit, that in the same manner the Jews would bind the hands and feet of the man to whom that girdle belonged, and delivered him up as a criminal to the Roman power. Upon these repeated premonitions of what he was to expect not only the disciples of Cæsarea, but those who had come with him, earnestly entreated him to desist from his purpose. We may learn from this passage, that the clearest intelligence of approaching danger is not always a sufficient warrant to decline it, even when, in the judgment of our brethren, we might decline it without sin. St. Paul was satisfied that, all circumstances considered, it was right for him to proceed. He had taken his determination upon good grounds, was brought so far on his way in safety; and to be told, though from an infallible authority, that his views of service could not be completed without great risk and trouble to himself, did not discourage him in the least. He was less affected by the prospect of sufferings from the Jews, than by the solicitations of his friends: and told them, that though they could not shake his resolution, their concern and importunity exceedingly distressed him. 'What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready not be bound only, but also to die, for the sake of the Lord Jesus.' In this short speech we may discern a spirit which is indeed the honour of human nature. Inflexibly firm to his character and duty, yet expressing the most tender feelings for his friends: while he contemplated the severest trials that might affect himself unmoved, he was almost overpowered by what he felt for others. But when they saw that he was not to be dissuaded, they desisted from their suit, and acquiesced in the will of the Lord.

A. D. 59.] Having staid some time at Cæsarea, he proceeded to Jerusalem; his friends, who had crossed the sea with him, resolving to expose themselves to a share of the dangers from which they could not divert him. They were accompanied likewise by an old disciple, named Mnason, of Cyprus, who resided at Jerusalem, and had offered his house for their accommodation. Their arrival was welcome to the brethren; and the next day St. Paul introduced his friends to St. James and the elders, who seem to have met together on purpose to receive him. To them he gave a succinct account of the success with which God had honoured his ministry among the Gentiles: which when they had heard

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they unanimously glorified God on his behalf, and rejoiced to hear of the accession of such numbers to the Christian faith.* But, at the same time, they gave him to understand, that the bulk of the Jewish converts had received no small prejudice against him; that there were even many thousands who had heard and believed hard things of him, as one who taught the Jews to apostatize from the law of Moses, and forbade them to practise circumcision, and the other rites and customs of their forefathers. In order to show them that this charge was groundless, they advised him to join himself publicly with four men, who were under a vow, and to attend with them the prescribed course of purification in the temple.

From this passage we are led to remark, that, through the weakness of human nature, the prejudices of education, and the arts of Satan, many thousands of professed Christians, in the first and purest period of the primitive church, while under the care of the apostles, had imbibed from hear-say, a degree of coldness and dislike towards one of the Lord's most faithful and most favoured servants. How far the method St. Paul was advised to pursue, for the removal of this misapprehension, was suited to his character and known integrity, is a question not easily determined. The apostles, considered in one light, as the penmen of a large part of the sacred canon of faith and practice, which the Lord was pleased by them to communicate to his church, were doubtless so far under the full direction and inspiration of his Holy Spirit; but we have no reason to believe, that, in every part of their own personal conduct, they were strictly infallible: nay, we have good warrant to conclude the contrary; as St. Paul himself assures us, that, upon a certain occasion, already mentioned, he withstood Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. It is therefore no way derogatory from the character and authority of Paul, to inquire, whether, upon this occasion, the tenderness of his spirit towards weak believers, and his desire of becoming all things to all men, (when the foundation-truths of the Gospel were not affected,) might not carry him too far. For though a reserve was made by James, in favour of the Gentile converts, that they should not be burdened with the observance of Jewish rites; yet the express end and design for which this step was proposed to him, and for which he seems to have undertaken it, was, that all might know or believe, not only that he was not against others' adhering to the Jewish ceremonies, but that he likewise orderly and statedly practised them himself; a circumstance which is far from being clear, or indeed probable,

* Acts xxi.

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if we consider the strain of his epistle to the Galatians, which, though the addition at the close of our copies mentions as sent from Rome, is generally allowed to have been written during his stay at Ephesus at the latest, if not sooner; and further, that for some time past his converse had been almost wholly confined to the Gentile believers, or to those churches of which they formed the largest part. If he became as a Jew amongst the Jews, it was, as he says himself, only with the hope of gaining* the Jews; which motive could no longer take place when he had finally withdrawn from their synagogues. Those, therefore, who suppose that in this instance he was over-persuaded to deviate from that openness of conduct which he generally maintained, seem to have some ground for their suspicion. This, however, is certain, his temporizing did not answer the proposed end; but instead of rendering him more acceptable, involved him in the greatest danger; for when the seven days were almost fufilled, some Jews of Asia, seeing him in the temple, pointed him out to the multitudes as the dangerous man who had apostatized from his religion, and was using his endeavours, wherever he went, to draw people from the worship of God according to the law of Moses. To this they added that he had profaned the holy place, by bringing Gentiles with him into the temple. This they conjectured from having seen Trophymus, an Ephesian, with him in the city. This part of the charge was wholly false; he had not brought his Gentile friends, into the temple, but he appeared so publicly with them upon other occasions, as to give some room for a surmise of this sort. If he submitted to the proposal of the elders, and attended in the temple himself, for the satisfaction of the Jewish converts, he would not go so far as to be ashamed of his friends, to make himself more acceptable to his enemies. It is our duty to avoid giving just offence; but if we boldly and honestly avow the Lord's people upon all proper occasions, without regard to names and parties, we must expect to suffer from the zealots of all sides.

Those who first laid hands on him were soon assisted by great numbers, for the whole city was moved, and the people ran together from all quarters. They dragged him out of the temple, and were upon the point of killing him, without giving him time or leave to speak a word for himself. They thought him absolutely in their power, but they were prevented by the appearance of Lysias a Roman officer, who had a post near the temple, to prevent or suppress insurrections. Upon the first notice he received of this disturbance, he came down with a party of soldiers. The evangelist observes, that when the Jews ran to kill Paul, the Ro-

* 1 Cor. ix. 20.

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mans ran to save him. Thus the succour the Lord provides for his people is always proportioned to the case, and effectual to the end. When danger is pressing, relief is speedy. Lysias, though ignorant of the cause of this tumult, judging by its violence that the apostle must have been some great malefactor, commanded him to be bound with two chains, and, when he could obtain no satisfactory information from the people, had him removed to the castle, or Roman station; but such was the violence of the incensed unmeaning multitude, that the soldiers were constrained to carry him in their arms up the steps, or stairs, which led thither from the temple. Here Paul obtained leave to speak for himself; the tribune inclining rather to a more favourable opinion of him, when he found he could speak Greek; and the people attended with some composure, when they heard him address them in the Hebrew or Syriac language.

In his discourse* he told them, that he had been brought up amongst themselves; and appealing to the high priest and elders concerning the zeal and earnestness with which he had formerly served their party, he related the extraordinary dispensation by which the Lord Jesus had conquered his heart. This was St. Paul's usual method of defence; and though no means are sufficient to reach the heart without a divine influence, yet, humanly speaking, a simple and faithful declaration of what God has done for our souls, seems most likely to convince, or at least to soften and silence those who oppose. Enraged as the Jews had been, they listened with patience to his relation, till he proceeded to intimate the Lord's designs in favour of the Gentiles, and that he was appointed an apostle to them. Accustomed to despise the rest of mankind, and to deem themselves the only people of God, they could not bear this: they interrupted him instantly; and, with one voice, declared it was not fit such a fellow should live upon the earth. They cast off their clothes, threw dust in the air, and their fury seemed to deprive them of their reason. Lysias, the tribune, secured him from their violence; but commanded him to be examined by scourging, that he might know his crime from his own mouth; according to a barbarous custom of putting those to torture against whom there was no sufficient evidence, that their own extorted confession, might furnish some grounds of proceeding against them; a custom still prevalent in most countries called Christian, though contrary to religion, to reason, and to the common sentiments of humanity. Our Lord Jesus was examined in this manner before Pilate; and, though the apostle was ready to follow the steps of his Master in suffer-

* Acts xxii.

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ing, yet, upon this occasion, he pleaded his right of exemption from such treatment, as being a native of Tarsus, a city honoured with the freedom of Rome. A Roman citizen was not legally liable either to be bound or scourged: therefore, when the tribune understood his privileges, he stopped further proceedings, and was something apprehensive for himself, that he had, in part, violated them already by ordering him to be bound;* but being still desirous to know what was laid to his charge, he convened the chief priests and the members of the Sanhedrim on the next day, and brought him again before them.

The apostle, fixing his eyes upon the high priest and council, as one who was neither ashamed nor afraid † to appear at their tribunal, began with a declaration that he had lived to that day in the exercise of a good conscience; but Ananias, the high priest, forgetting his character as a judge, commanded those who stood near to strike him on the face. The apostle severely rebuked his partiality, in perverting the cause of justice, and warned him of the righteous judgment of God, the supreme Judge, who would surely punish his hypocrisy.‡ His reply to those who reproved him for speaking in such terms to the high priest, seems to intimate, that the injurious treatment he had received had raised an undue warmth in his spirit, though it may be supposed that he denounced his future doom under a superior and prophetic impulse. But knowing that the council was composed of Pharisees and Saducees, who were at variance amongst themselves about several weighty points, particularly the doctrine of a resurrection, he declared himself a Pharisee, and that the opposition he met with from the Sadducees was owing to his belief and hope in that doctrine. The Pharisees immediately suspended their present resentment, to embrace the occasion offered for opposing their old antagonists, and upon this issue espoused his cause, declaring him innocent; and said, that if a spirit or angel (the existence of both which the Sadducees denied) had spoken to him, they ought not to fight against God, by refusing to hear him. Upon this, a great dissention took place; and Lysias, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces between the contending parties, put an end to the conference, and ordered the sol-

* A Roman citizen might be bound with a chain, but not tied with thongs, or beaten with rods. 'Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari.' CICERO.

† Acts xxiii.

‡ 'Thou whited wall!' A clay wall, glossed over with white, is an apt emblem of a man who carries on a malicious design under the pretence and forms of justice. Hateful is the character, and dreadfully dangerous the condition of such.

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diers to take him by force and secure him in the castle. It is, indeed, often well for believers, that the people of the world, though agreed in one point, namely, to oppose the Gospel, are divided and subdivided in other respects; so, that, for the sake of a favourite passion, or to cross an opposite interest, they will sometimes protect those whom they would otherwise willingly destroy.

The next night he received full amends for all he had suffered, and was confirmed against the utmost efforts of his enemies' malice; for the Lord Jesus, whom he served, vouchsafed to appear to him in a vision, commanded him to be of good cheer, owned his gracious acceptance of his late testimony in Jerusalem, and promised that none should hinder him the honour of bearing witness to his truth at Rome likewise. The world has been sometimes surprised at the confidence which the faithful servants of Christ have shown in the midst of dangers, and in the face of death; but if their supports were known, the wonder would cease. If the Lord speaks, his word is effectual; and when he says, Be of good courage, and fear not! his people, out of weakness, are made strong.

Little were the incredulous Jews aware of what a power and vigilance were engaged in his preservation; and therefore, impatient of delays, they resolved to destroy him immediately. To manifest their resolution, and to quicken their diligence, more than forty of them bound themselves under the penalty of the great curse, or Anathama, not to eat or drink till they had killed him. They acquainted the priests and rulers with their engagement, and proposed, that they should request Lysias to order him once more to appear before them in council, and that then those who had combined in this oath would be ready to assassinate him. But no counsel or device can stand against the Lord. This black design was, by some means, providentially made known to a young man who was Paul's sister's son, who gave notice of it first to him, and then, by his desire, to Lysias; who, finding the Jews implacably bent against Paul's life, determined to place him further out of their reach, and accordingly sent him away, that same night, under a strong guard, who conducted him to Cæsarea, and delivered him to Felix, the Roman governor, together with a letter from Lysias, importing his care to preserve the prisoner because he understood him to be a Roman citizen, and that he had commanded his accusers to follow. Thus the conspiracy, which his enemies had formed to destroy him, proved the occasion of his deliverance out of their hands.

In about five days afterwards, Ananias, the high priest, with the elders of the council, appeared* before Felix, against Paul.

* Acts xxiv.

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The charge was opened by Tertullus, a venal orator or advocate, whom they had retained for this purpose; who began with a commendation of the governor, in terms which might have suited the illustrious actions and wise measures of princes studious of the public good, but were ill applied to Felix, (who was infamous for his cruelty and oppression,) and in the name of the Jews who hated him. But enmity to the Gospel will make men stoop to the meanest flattery and servility, if, by that means, they have hope of gaining their point! The sum of the accusation was that Paul was an enemy to church and state, a disturber of the established religion, and a mover of sedition against the government; to which was added, as a popular proof of the charge, that he was a ringleader of the sect or heresy of the Nazarenes, so called from Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by a former governor for asserting himself to be a king. Thus much seems implied in the term Nazarene, as the Jews used it. The apostle began his defence with a protestation of his innocence, as to any design of moving sedition or tumult, which, he said his enemies were unable to prove by a single fact. He proceeded to inform the governor of the true motive of their enmity against him, and acknowledged that he worshipped God in a way which they stigmatised with the name of heresy or division; for the proper* meaning of heresy is no more than sect or party. By further declaring that he worshipped the God of his fathers, and believed all things written in the law and the prophets, he proved, from the object and the manner of his worship, that he was not guilty of any blameable innovations. He professed the hope of a resurrection, which his enemies could not but allow, and that it was his constant study† and endeavour to maintain a conscience void of offence; and added, that it was not he, but the Jews themselves,

* As the apostle only cautions Titus to reject or avoid a heretic, (Tit. iii. 10.) but has not defined him expressly, many writers and teachers have had a fair field to exercise their skill or their passions upon the subject: yet the question is far from determined to this day. Some would treat all those as heretics who differ from them, either in judgment or practice; others explain the word quite away, as though the admonition to avoid a heretic was wholly unnecessary. Perhaps the advice to Titus is nearly, if not exactly, equivalent to Rom. xvi. 17. The spirit of truth produces unity; the spirit of division is heresy. And the man who fiercely stickles for opinions of his own, who acts contrary to the peaceable, forbearing, humble spirit of the Gospel, who affects to form a party, and to be thought considerable in it, is so far a heretic.

† Acts xxvi. 16. The Greek word here used, (ασκεω,) denotes the study, diligence, and proficiency of a person who is desirous to excel and be eminent in any particular art; as a painter, for instance; he searches out the best masters and the best pieces; he studies and copies the beauties of others' works, and is continually retouching and improving upon his own; his acquaintance, reflections, and recreations, are all accommodated to his main purpose; and, though his pencil is sometimes at rest, his imagination is seldom idle. Similar

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who had raised the tumult, by assaulting him when he was peaceably attending in the temple, according to the prescribed rules. He observed, that his first accusers were not present, as they ought to have been; and challenged any, who were within hearing, to prove their allegations in any one instance.

Felix, having, perhaps, a favourable opinion of the Christian profession, which had been settled some time at Cæsarea, and being likewise desirous of further information, deferred the full discussion of the affair till the arrival of Lysias; and committed Paul, in the mean time, to the care of a centurion, as a prisoner at large; allowing him to go abroad in the city, and giving his friends liberty to visit him at home. And thus he was providentially delivered from the bloodthirsty Jews, and found an asylum in the Roman power, which they had endeavoured to engage for his destruction.

A. D. 60.] He was sent for, not long after, by Felix, and discoursed before him and his wife Drusilla, concerning the faith of Christ. Curiosity was the governor's motive; but the apostle, who knew his character, was faithful to him, und would not speak of the faith of Christ only to one who could not understand it, but made a home application, by enlarging on righteousness, temperance, and the important consequences of a future judgment. These were fit topics to press upon an unjust and rapacious governor, who lived in adultery, Drusilla, his reputed wife, having forsaken a lawful husband to live with him. She was by birth a Jewess, daughter of the Herod whose death we have already mentioned: and having renounced her religion and her husband for Felix, was, by the judgment of God, given up to hardness of heart; so that it does not appear that the apostle's discourse made any impression upon her. It was otherwise with Felix, who though a wicked man, had sinned against less light: he trembled at what he heard; and, not able to conceal his concern, he cut short the interview, with a promise to send for him at a convenient season. So great, sometimes, is the power of truth, when faithfully enforced! With this only advantage on his side, Paul, the prisoner, triumphs over a haughty governor, and makes him tremble. Great, likewise, is the power of sin! Felix trembled at the review of the past, and the prospect of the future; but he could not stop; he found some avocation for his present relief, and put off his most important concerns for a fitter opportunity, which, it is probable, never came. He saw and heard Paul afterwards; but the same man had no more the same influence, the accompanying force of the Spirit was withheld, and then he had

to this is the exercise of a good conscience, formed upon the model of the Scripture, and improved by diligence, meditation, examination, and experience.

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no further view in conversing with him, but the hope of receiving money for his enlargement. When the apostle had continued in this situation about two years, Felix was recalled from his government. He had governed the Jews with severity and injustice, and had reason to fear they would accuse him to the emperor; therefore, to ingratiate himself with them, he left Paul in his confinement, thinking that the detention of the person they hated might make them more readily excuse what was past; or, at least, he durst not provoke them further by releasing him.

A. D. 62.] When Festus, who succeeded Felix in the government, went up to Jerusalem,* the high priest and elders applied to him, and requested that Paul might be sent thither to be tried before the council; and they appointed proper instruments to assault and murder him in the journey. It seems they expected this favour would be easily granted, as it is usual for governors, at their first coming amongst a people, to do some popular act; but Festus refused, and commanded them to follow him to Cæsarea, where he himself would judge in the cause. The Jews accordingly exerted themselves in one more effort, and, when Festus was returned to Cæsarea, presented themselves before him on an appointed day; and Paul being brought into the court, they accused him heavily, as they had done before, and to as little effect, not being able to prove any thing against him, or to invalidate his protestation that he had committed no offence, either against the law, or the temple, or the Roman government. Festus, who had refused to send him to Jerusalem before, was now willing to oblige them, perceiving the controversy was of a religious kind, and what he had little knowledge of: he therefore asked Paul if he was willing to be tried, in his presence, before the council at Jerusalem. The apostle, who knew what treatment he might expect from the Jews, answered, that he was then at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where he ought to be tried, and that, if found guilty, he was not unwilling to suffer; but that against the proposal of being delivered up to those who thirsted for his blood, he appealed to Cæsar. This was one privilege of a Roman citizen, that, when he thought himself aggrieved in an inferior court, he might, by entering such an appeal, put a stop to proceedings, and refer the cause to the immediate determination of the emperor. From the example of St. Paul, who counted not his life dear, but was willing, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus, we learn, that it is very allowable for a Christian to avail himself of the laws and privileges of his country, when unjustly persecuted for righteousness sake: and perhaps, in some cases, it would be blameable to omit it. Civil liberty is a *deposi-*

* Acts xxv.

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tum with which we are intrusted for posterity, and, by all lawful means, should be carefully preserved. Festus, after having consulted with his counsel and lawyers upon this unexpected turn, admitted the appeal, and determined he should be sent to Rome. Paul had long had a desire to visit the believers in that city, and had formed some plans concerning it. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. His way was now open in a manner he had not thought of; but in such a manner as made it more evident that his bonds proved to the furtherance of the Gospel.

Soon after this, Agrippa, son of the late Herod, who had large territories and the title of king, under the Romans, came, with his sister Bernice, to congratulate Festus upon his accession to his government. He was a man of a fair character, a professed Jew, but possessed of moderation and prudence. During their stay, Festus informed them of what had lately happened concerning Paul. The whole that he understood of the affair was, that he had not been guilty of any crime; but that his accusers had certain questions against him of their own superstitions, and concerning one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive. To him the life and the death of Jesus were points of equal indifference: not so to those who believe he died for them, and who expect that because he lives, they shall live also. This imperfect account made Agrippa desirous to hear Paul himself; and, accordingly, the next day, Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, being seated in *court, attended by their officers and train, and a number of the principal people, Paul was once more brought forth† to speak in public for himself. On this occasion he addressed himself particularly to Agrippa; and, having expressed his satisfaction that he was permitted to speak before one who was so well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, he related the cause of his present confinement. He professed his faith and hope in the Scriptures, and then, as he had done before, he gave him an account of the extraordinary means by which he had been changed from a‡ persecutor to a follower of Jesus, in his journey to Damascus. His defence, therefore, (as has been formerly observed,) was rather experimental than argumentative,

* The apology St. Paul made for himself was not his trial; he had already stopped all proceedings at law by his appeal to Cæsar; nor was Festus then as a judge upon his tribunal.

† Acts xxvi.

‡ Speaking of his past conduct towards the disciples, he calls it *madness; being exceedingly*, or, (as we express it,) raging *mad against them*. A man in this state will assault any person he meets; he waits for no provocation, listens to no entreaty, regards no consequences. Thus the apostle judged of himself when a persecutor of the church; and the spirit of persecution in every age has been the same. May God restore those to their right minds who are governed by it!

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and made very different impressions upon his hearers. Festus, who seems to have had a good opinion of his sincerity and intention, yet, supposing no man in his sober senses could believe such a strange story, interrupted him in his narration, and, with an air, rather of pity than indignation, said, 'Paul, thou art beside thyself! much learning hath made thee mad!'* A similar judgment is passed, by too many, upon all who profess an acquaintance with the life of faith in an unseen Jesus; but, ordinarily, now the effect is not ascribed to the excess of learning, but to the want of it: as, on the other hand, a man who maintains the wildest absurdities, puts his judgment and understanding to little hazard in the world's esteem, if his chimeras are set off with a competent apparatus of literature. Agrippa, however, was differently affected, especially when Paul made a bold appeal to himself concerning the notoriety of the facts which had lately happened, and the truth of the prophecies with which they were connected. Here the power of truth triumphed again; and Agrippa was so struck, that, without regarding the numerous assembly, or the displeasure such a declaration might give both to Jews and Romans, particularly to Festus, who had expressed his sentiment just before, he gave way to the emotions of his mind, and said aloud, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Yet this was but an involuntary conviction; it did honour to the apostle, but was of no benefit to himself. And the concession which, at first view, seems to proceed from an ingenuous spirit, when closely examined, amounts but to this, that though Agrippa was, indeed, convinced of the truth, his heart was so attached to the present evil world, that he had neither courage nor will to follow it: as when we say of a picture, It looks almost alive, we do not mean, strictly, that there is any more life in the painting, than in the canvass on which it is drawn, but only that the resemblance is strong; so the almost Christian, however specious in his professions, is still destitute of that living principle which alone can enable him to make them good, and is, in reality, an utter stranger to true Christianity. In the graceful return the apostle made to the king's acknowledgement, he hinted at this defect, wishing that both Agrippa, and all who heard him, were not only almost, but altogether, as he was himself, with an exception to the chains he wore for the cause of the Gospel. This answer discovers, in one view, the confidence he had in his

* His answer to Festus is expressed with much accuracy and precision. 'I am not mad, most noble Festus! but speak forth, (ἀποφθεγγομαι,) the words of truth and soberness.' Madness discovers itself either in the apprehension of a false object, or in the false apprehension of a true one. The things he spoke of were true in themselves, and his ideas of them just and proportionate.

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cause, the happy frame of his mind, the engaging turn of his address, and his unbounded benevolence. He could wish nothing better, than what he himself felt, to his dearest friends, and he wished nothing worse to his greatest enemies; nay, he wished that his enemies might, if possible, experience all his comforts, without any of his trials. When Festus and Agrippa were withdrawn, they agreed in their opinion, that he had done nothing deserving of death, or even of imprisonment, and that he might have been released, if he had not himself prevented it by appealing to Cæsar.

In consequence of the determination to send him to Rome,* he was committed to the custody of a centurion named Julius, with whom he embarked in a vessel that was on a trading voyage to several parts of the Lesser Asia. Aristarchus, and some other of his friends, went with him; and particularly the evangelist Luke, who seems to have been the inseparable companion of his travels from the first time he was at Troas. They touched the following day at Sidon, where the centurion gave him liberty to refresh himself, and visit his friends. At their next port, Myra, in Lycia, a vessel offering which was bound directly for Italy, they went on board her. In the beginning of this passage they were retarded by contrary winds. At length they reached the island of Crete (now called Candia) and having put into a port called the Fair-Havens, Paul would have persuaded them to have staid there, intimating that as the winter was now advancing, they would meet with many inconveniences and dangers, if they ventured to proceed any further. Long voyages were seldom attempted during the winter in those days, or for many ages after, till the knowledge of the compass made way for those great improvements in navigation, which now embolden the mariner to sail indifferently at any season of the year. But, it is probable, the apostle's precaution was not merely founded upon the obvious disadvantages of the season, but rather upon an extraordinary pre-intimation of what was soon to happen. But his remonstrance was over-ruled, the centurion preferring the judgment of the master of the ship, who thought it best, if possible, to reach another haven at the west end of the island, which was thought to be more commodious and safe than the place Paul proposed. A favourable wind springing up from the south determined their resolves, and they set sail with a good confidence of soon reaching their desired port.

There is little doubt but Paul's case and character had, by this time, engaged the notice of many of his fellow passengers in

* Acts xxvii.

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the ship. Upon a superficial inquiry, they would learn, that he was the follower of one Jesus, who had been crucified: that he was esteemed a setter-forth of strange gods, and charged with having disturbed the public peace wherever he came. He probably took frequent occasions to speak of his Lord and Master to those about him; and, as he had several companions, the manner of their social worship could hardly pass unobserved; but no emergency had as yet occurred to manifest the solidity and force of his principles to full advantage, and to make it evident to all with whom he sailed, that his God was far unlike the idols of the Heathens; and that the religion which prompted him to do and suffer so much for the sake of Jesus, was founded not in the imaginations and inventions of men, but in reality and truth. In prosperous circumstances, most people are easily satisfied with their own principles, and are ready to take it for granted, that even the notions received from no better source than tradition or custom, cannot be wrong, or at least, will not be dangerous; but it is in a season of uncommon distress that the truth and efficacy of vital religion appear with the most incontestable authority. The God who alone can deliver when all hope of safety is taken away, and the religion which can inspire a man with confidence and peace when there is nothing but dismay and confusion around him, will then extort some acknowledgment, even from those who had before thought of them with indifference. From these considerations we may collect one general reason why the Lord, who, by his divine providence, adjusts the time and circumstances of every event, and without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, permits his faithful people to be so often exercised with severe trials. It is to manifest that their hopes are well grounded; that they have not taken up with words and notions, but have a real and sure support, and can hope and rejoice in God under those pressures which deprive others of all their patience and all their courage: and, on the other hand, to evince that his power and faithfulness are surely engaged on their behalf: that he puts an honour upon their prayers, is near to help them in the time of trouble, and can deliver them out of their greatest extremities. We are not then to wonder that this favoured servant of the Lord, after having endured so many sufferings and hardships upon the land, was exposed, in the course of this voyage, to equal dangers and difficulties upon the sea; for they had not long quitted their last port before their hopes of gaining a better were blasted; they were overtaken by a sudden and violent storm. The name given it by the historian, Euroclydon, expresses its direction to have been from the eastern quarter, and its energy upon the waves. The tempest irresistibly overpowered the ma-

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riners, and rendered their art impracticable and vain. They were compelled to abandon the ship to the direction of the wind, and were hurried away they knew not whither. Mention is made of the difficulty they had to secure the ship's boat, as the only probable means of escaping if they should be wrecked, which yet, in the event, was wholly useless to them; likewise of their endeavours to strengthen the ship by girding her with ropes, and of their throwing a considerable part of the lading and tackling into the sea. In this distressed situation, expecting every hour to be either swallowed up by the waves, or dashed to pieces against unknown rocks or shores, they continued fourteen days. When they were almost worn out with hardship and anxiety, and there was no human probability of deliverance, the Lord manifested the care he had of his servants. The seamen had not seen sun or stars for many days; but his eye had been upon Paul and his companions every moment. No one on board could even conjecture into what part of the sea the ship was driven; but the Lord knew, and his angels knew; and now one was commanded to appear, to comfort the apostle, and to give him a word of comfort for all on board. Upon this, he addressed the people in the ship, exhorting them to take some food, and to be of good courage; for that the God to whom he belonged, and whom he served, had given him assurance, by an angel, not only of his own safety, but that the lives of all on board should be preserved for his sake; that the ship would be cast upon a certain island; but he fully relied on the promise, that not one of them should be lost: he had been told that he must stand before Cæsar, which was a sufficient earnest of his preservation; for who, or what can disappoint the purpose of God? Amidst all these threatening appearances, Paul was, in reality, as safe in the storm, as Cæsar could be thought upon the throne. And thus all his servants are inviolably preserved by his watchful providence, so that neither elements nor enemies can hurt them till the work he has appointed them is accomplished.

At length the seamen perceived indications that they were drawing near land; and when they were driven into a convenient depth of water, they cast anchor, and waited for the approach of day. In this interval the people were encouraged, by Paul's advice and example, to eat a hearty meal, by which their strength and spirits were recruited to sustain the fatigue they were yet to undergo. In the morning they saw an island, but knew it not. The mariners, regarding their own safety only, were about to make their escape in the boat: but Paul informing the soldiers that they could not be saved, unless the seamen remained in the ship, they paid so much regard to his judgment as immediately

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to cut the ropes by which the boat was fastened, and give her up to the sea.

Their only remaining resource was to force the ship upon the shore, in a place where landing would be most practicable, and of this the mariners were the most proper judges. If this isl (as is generally supposed) was that which we now call Malta, we know that it is almost environed with rocks. They having therefore discovered an open bay, with a beach of sand or pebbles,* endeavoured to run the ship there; but had the management of this business been left to the soldiers and passengers, who were unexperienced in sea affairs, they might probably have let her drive at random against the rocks, where an escape would (humanly speaking) have been impossible. In this view we may observe, that the apostle's firm confidence in the promise he had received was connected with a prudent attention to the means in their power, from which the promise received was so far from dispensing them, that it was their chief encouragement to be diligent in employing them. This incident may be applied to points of more general importance, and, if carefully attended to, might have determined, or prevented many unnecessary and perplexing disputes concerning the divine decrees, and their influence on the contingencies of human life. What God has appointed shall surely come to pass, but in such a manner, that all the means and secondary causes by which he has determined to fulfil his designs, shall have their proper place and subserviency. Accordingly they made the best of their way to the shore; but before they quite reached it, the ship was stopped by a point or bank,† where her fore part stuck fast and remained immoveable; but the stern, or hinder part, was presently broken by the violence of the surges. In the general confusion the soldiers, unmindful how much they were indebted to Paul, proposed that all the prisoners should be killed without distinction, lest they should be accountable if any of them escaped: but the centurion, who interested himself in his preservation, rejected the motion, and commanded every one to do what they could for their own safety. Many who

*'They discovered a certain creek, with a shore.' But there was a shore all round the island. Αιγιαλος does not express the sea coast in general, or a rocky, craggy shore, but the skirts of an open bay convenient for launching, landing, or drawing a net for fish. See Matt. xiii. 2. 48. John xxi. 4. A mariner who understood Greek would, perhaps, render the sentence thus—'They observed a certain bay, with a beach.' And this they chose as the most likely place to get safe to land.

† Τοπον διθαλασσον is rendered in our version, 'a place where two seas met;' but there is nothing answerable to the word *met*; probably it means what the mariners call a spit, or point of sand, running off from the shore, and which had a sufficient depth of water on either side.

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could swim cast themselves into the sea; the rest availed themselves of planks and broken pieces of the ship; and the merciful providence of the Lord gave their endeavours success, so that the whole company, consisting of two hundred and seventy-six persons, came safe to land.

The inhabitants, though called Barbarians, received and accommodated them with great humanity, and manifested a tenderness too rarely found upon such occasions, amongst those who bear the name of Christians; they brought them under cover, and kindled fires to warm and dry them. The apostle, who cheerfully suited himself to all circumstances, assisted in supplying the fire with fuel; but having gathered a parcel of sticks, a viper, which was unperceived in the midst of them, fastened itself upon his hand. He had just escaped from storm and shipwreck, and was exposed to as great a danger of another kind. Such is the nature of our present state; and it is a proof of our pride and ignorance, that we are seldom greatly apprehensive for ourselves, but when some formidable appearance is before our eyes. A tempest, pestilence, or earthquake, alarms us, and not without reason; but, alas! we are not such mighty creatures as to have nothing to fear but from such powerful agents. A tile, a fly, a hair, or a grain of sand, are sufficient instruments, in the hand of God, to remove a king from the throne to the grave, or to cut off the conqueror at the head of his victorious army. On the other hand, those who serve the Lord, and trust in him, are equally safe under all events: neither storms, nor flood, nor flames, nor the many unthought-of evils which lurk around in the smoothest scenes of life, have permission to hurt them till their race is finished; and then it little signifies by what means they are removed into their Master's joy. The apostle, in the strength of divine faith, shook off the venomous creature into the fire, and remained unmoved and unhurt. The islanders, who saw what had past, judged at first (from those faint apprehensions of a superior power inflicting punishment on the wicked, which seem to remain in the darkest and most ignorant nations) that he was certainly a murderer, who, though he had escaped the seas, was pursued by vengeance, and marked out for destruction; but when, after expecting for some time to see him drop down dead, they found that he had received no harm, they retracted their censure, and conceived him to be a god, or something more than man. This event probably prepared them to hear him with attention.

The apostle and his friends were courteously entertained three days by Publius, the chief person of the island, who resided near the place of their landing. He requited the kindness of his host by restoring to health his father, who had been some time ill of a

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fever and dysentery. In the same manner he laid his hands on many sick persons, who were healed in answer to his prayers. These acceptable services procured him much favour from the inhabitants; and when, after three months' stay, he was about to depart, they furnished him liberally with necessary provisions for his voyage.

A. D. 61.] They sailed from thence in a ship of Alexandria, that had wintered in the island, and stopping three days at Syracuse in Sicily, soon after arrived at Rhegium, and from thence, in two days, at Puteoli, near Naples, where they disembarked, and continued a week, at the request of the Christians of the place. From Puteoli to Rome their journey lay about one hundred miles by land.

The disciples at Rome having heard of Paul's approach, several of them met him at a place called Appii Forum, and another party at the Three Taverns; the former place being about fifty, and the other thirty miles from the city. At the sight of these believers, whom he had loved unseen, we are told he thanked God and took courage. Even the apostle Paul, though habitually flaming with zeal and love, was not always in the same frame. We learn, from his own account of himself, that he had sometimes sharp exercises of mind; and perhaps this was such a time, when his thoughts were much engaged on what awaited him upon his arrival at Rome, and his appearance before the cruel and capricious Nero. The Lord has so constituted his body, the church, that the different members are needful and helpful to each other, and the stronger are often indebted to the weaker. St. Paul himself was revived and animated at this juncture by the sight of those who were, in every respect, inferior to him. It rejoiced him to see that Christ his Lord was worshipped at Rome also; and being in the presence of those with whom he could open his mind, and freely confer upon the glorious truths that filled his heart, he forgot, at once, the fatigue he had lately suffered, and the future difficulties he had reason to expect.

Upon their arrival at Rome, the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the proper officer; but Paul had the favour allowed him to live in a house which he hired, under the guard of one soldier. Here he immediately discovered his usual activity of spirit in his Master's cause; and, without losing time, sent, on the third day, for the principal persons of the Jews, (according to his general custom of making the first declarations of the Gospel to them,) and acquainted them with the cause of his prosecution and appeal. He assured them that he had no intention in vindicating himself, to lay any thing to the charge of his own people; adding that, not for any singularities of his own, or for any offence against

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the law of Moses, but for the hope of Israel, he was bound with* the chain he then wore. They answered, that they had received no information concerning him from Judea, but that they understood the sect to which he professed an attachment was every where spoken against; they therefore desired to hear his sentiments, and appointed a day for the purpose, when many of them came to him, and he spent the whole day, from morning till evening, in proving, confirming, and explaining the nature and necessity of the Gospel and kingdom of Christ, from the books of Moses and the prophets. His discourse had good effect upon some, but others believed not, and they departed with considerable disagreement among themselves; the apostle taking leave of them with that solemn warning, which our Lord had often used in the course of his ministry, from the prophecy of Isaiah,† denouncing incurable and judicial blindness and hardness of heart upon those who wilfully rejected the proposal of the truth.

He remained a prisoner in his own hired house for the space of two years, having an unrestrained liberty to receive all who came to him, and to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Christ: which, we learn from his epistles,‡ he did with so much success, that his imprisonment evidently contributed to the furtherance of the Gospel, enlarged the number of believers, and animated the zeal and confidence of those who had already received faith and grace.

A. D. 63.] The history of St. Luke ends here, which I have followed more closely than I at first designed; partly because the facts he has recorded suggest many reflections which have, more or less, a reference to our main design, and partly from a reluctance to leave the only sure and incontestible history by which our researches into the establishment and state of the primitive church can be guided. For though some monuments of the early ages of Christianity, which are still extant, have a great share of merit, and will afford us materials to make good our plan, yet they must be selected with caution; for it would be a want of ingenuousness not to acknowledge, that there are great mixtures and blemishes to be found in the writings of those who lived nearest to the apostles' times. And in the most ancient historical remains several things have a place which show that a spirit of credulity and superstition had very early an extensive influence; the evi-

*Among the Romans, the prisoner was always chained to the soldier or soldiers who guarded him. St. Paul speaks of his chain, both to friends and enemies, with an indifference that shows how well content he was to wear it for his Master's sake. See Ephes. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 16.

† Isa. vi. 9, 10. ‡ Philip. i. 12.

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dent traces of which have given too fair an occasion to some persons, of more learning than candour, to attempt to bring the whole of those records into disrepute. But where the characteristic genius and native tendency of the Gospel are rightly understood, and carefully attended to, a mind, not under the power of bias and prejudice, will be furnished with sufficient *data*, whereby to distinguish what is genuine and worthy of credit, from the spurious and uncertain additions which have been incautiously received.

I shall be brief in deducing our history from this period to the close of the first century. St. Paul, after more than two years' confinement at Rome, having not yet finished his appointed measure of service, was providentially preserved from the designs of all his enemies, and set at liberty. We are told by some, that in pursuance of the design he had long before expressed, he went into Spain, and from thence to Gaul, now called France: nor have endeavours been wanting to prove that he preached the Gospel even in the British isles. That he, at some time, accomplished his desire of visiting Spain, is not improbable; but we have no certain evidence that he did so. Much less is there any ground for supposing that he was either in France or Britain. From his own writings however, we have good reason to believe, that upon his dismission from Rome, he revisited the churches of Syria, and some other parts of Asia; for, in his epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions his purpose of seeing them, in company with his beloved Timothy; and writing to Philemon, who lived at Colosse, he requests him to prepare him a lodging, for that he hoped to be with him shortly. And it was probably in this progress that he preached in Crete, and committed the churches he gathered there to the care of Titus; for we have no account in the Acts of his having visited that island before, except the little time he touched there in his passage to Rome, which seems not to have been sufficient for so great a work. How he was employed afterwards we know not, but it is generally agreed, that towards the latter part of Nero's reign, he returned to Rome, and there received the crown of martyrdom.

In the accounts preserved of the rest of the apostles, we likewise meet with great uncertainty; nor can any thing be determined to satisfaction, concerning either the seat of their labours, or the time or manner of their deaths. I shall therefore waive a particular detail of what is not supported by sufficient proof. I only observe, concerning St. Peter, that the assertion of his having been bishop of Rome, on which (and not on the true rock) the whole system of the papacy is built, is not only inconsistent with what is recorded of him in the Acts, and the silence of St.

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Paul concerning him, in his epistles he wrote from thence—but is so far without foundation in ecclesiastical history, that it still remains a point of dubious controversy, whether he ever saw Rome in his life. If he did, it was probably towards the close of it; and the most received opinion is, that he suffered martyrdom there at the same time with St. Paul; that Peter was crucified, and that Paul had the favour of being beheaded, in consideration that he was a Roman citizen.

The Christians, though generally despised, and often insulted, for their profession, had not hitherto been subject to a direct and capital persecution; but Nero, who, intoxicated with power, had in a few years arrived at a pitch of wickedness and cruelty till then unheard of, at length directed his rage against the servants of Christ.

A. D. 64.] In his tenth year the city of Rome was set on fire, and a considerable part of it consumed. This calamity was generally imputed to him as the author, and it seems not without justice. Mischief and the misery of others were the study of his life; and he is reported to have expressed great pleasure at the spectacle, and to have sung the burning of Troy while Rome was in flames. Though he afterwards did many popular things, and spared no expense in relieving the people, and rebuilding the city, he could not clear himself from the suspicion of the fact, any otherwise than by charging it upon the Christians. The Heathen historian Tacitus, in his account of this event, enables us so well to judge of the character which the Christians bore in his time, that I shall subjoin a translation of it for the information of the unlearned.

'But neither the emperor's donations, nor the atonement offered to the gods, could remove the scandal of this report, but it was still believed that the city had been burnt by his instigation. Nero, therefore, to put a stop to the rumour, charged the fact, and inflicted the severest punishments for it, upon the Christians, as they were commonly called, a people detestable for their crimes. The author of this sect was Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by Pontius Pilate. The destructive superstition which was by this means suppressed for the present, soon broke out again, and not only overspread Judea, where it first arose, but reached even to Rome, where all abominations, from every quarter, are sure to meet and to find acceptance. Some who confessed themselves Christians were first apprehended, and a vast multitude afterwards upon their impeachment, who were condemned, not so much for burning the city, as for being the objects of universal hatred. Their sufferings and torments were heightened by mockery and derision. Some were enclosed in

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the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn in pieces by dogs; others were crucified; and others, being covered with inflammable matter, were lighted up as torches at the close of day. These spectacles were exhibited in Nero's gardens, where he held a kind of Circensian show, either mixing with the populace in the habit of a charioteer, or himself contending in the race. Hence, it came to pass, that, criminal and undeserving of mercy as they were, yet they were pitied, as being destroyed merely to gratify his savage and cruel disposition, and not with any view to the public good.'

From this quotation, it appears, that the Christians were considered by the Heathens as a sect that had been almost crushed by the death of their Master, but suddenly recovered strength, and spread far and near soon afterwards: that they were so extremely odious, on account of the supposed absurdity and wickedness of their principles, as to be thought capable of committing the worst crimes, when no sufficient proof could be found of their having committed any: that they were treated as the professed enemies of mankind, and therefore, upon the first occasion that offered, were promiscuously destroyed with the most unrelenting cruelty: that they did not suffer as common malefactors, who, when under the actual punishment of their crimes, are usually beheld with some commiseration, but that insult and derision were added to the most exquisite inventions of torture: and lastly, that if these violent proceedings were blamed by any, it proceeded rather from the hatred they bore to Nero, than from a suspicion that the Christians met with any thing more than their just desert. These things are carefully to be observed, if we would form a right judgment of the primitive church. It is possible, many persons suppose, that St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians, were (like the pastoral letters of bishops in our own times) addressed to the bulk of the inhabitants in those places; but the case was far otherwise. The Romans, to whom St. Paul wrote, were inconsiderable in their number; most of them contemptible in the sight of the world on account of their poverty and low rank in life, and (as the above extract from Tacitus proves) the objects of public detestation for their attachment to the name and doctrines of Jesus.

Whether this persecution was confined to Rome, or carried on by public authority through all the provinces where Christians were to be found, is not absolutely certain, though the latter seems most probable; for it is hardly to be supposed that Nero would rage against them in the capital, and suffer them to live in peace every where else. Tertullian expressly asserts that Nero enjoined their destruction, by public edicts, in the several provin-

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ces; and his testimony seems worthy of credit, as he mentions it in his apology, which, though written more than a century afterwards, was not at so great a distance of time but he might easily have been contradicted, if he had advanced an untruth. Besides, the example of Nero, without his express injunctions, seems to have been sufficient to awaken persecution against a people so generally hated as the Christians were. Multitudes, upon this occasion, had the honour to seal their profession with their blood; but the cause for which they suffered triumphed over all opposition, and the martyrs' places in the church were supplied by an accession of fresh converts.

This storm, though sharp, was not of very long continuance; it terminated with the life of Nero, who was compelled, though with extreme reluctance, to destroy himself with his own hands, that he might escape the most ignominious punishment; he having been, by a decree of the senate, justly and solemnly branded with the character which malice and ignorance would have fixed upon the christian name, and condemned to be whipped to death, as an enemy of the human race.

A. D. 68, 69.] After him, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, were successively acknowledged emperors; but their reigns were short, and their deaths violent. The Jewish war, which ended in the final catastrophe and dispersion of that nation, was, at this time, carried on under the command of Vespasian, who, while engaged in that service, was saluted emperor by his army.

A. D. 70.] Upon this, leaving the conduct of the war to his son Titus, he returned to Italy; and, soon after the death of Vitellius, was peaceably established in the government. Titus having a secret commission from God (whom he knew not) to execute his fierce displeasure against the Jews, upon whom wrath was now come to the uttermost, after destroying the whole country of Judea, with fire and sword, laid siege to Jerusalem; and having taken it, at the end of five months, with an incredible slaughter of the Jews and the destruction of the temple, he burnt the city, and pulled down the very walls. More than a million of people, who had trusted in lying words, and boasted themselves of an empty profession, perished in this war: and those who survived were reduced to slavery, sold, and dispersed into all parts, at the will of conquerors. Thus ended the Jewish economy; and the law of Moses having received the accomplishment of all its types, ceremonies, and precepts, in the person, life, and death of Jesus the Messiah, was irrevocably abrogated as to its observance, which was rendered utterly impracticable by the destruction of the temple and the cessation of the priesthood.

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A. D. 79.] Under Vespassian, and Titus, who succeeded him, the Christian church enjoyed considerable peace and liberty, though, upon many occasions, they suffered from the ill-will of their adversaries. Few, however, were put to death, publicly and professedly for their religion, till Domitian, who came to the empire after his brother Titus, [A. D. 81.] and who too much resembled Nero in his temper and conduct, imitated him likewise in employing his power against the followers of Christ, [A. D. 94.] Several are mentioned in history, who suffered in his time; but as little of moment, or that can be fully depended on, is recorded concerning them, I wave a recital of bare names. It is generally believed that St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos by this emperor, where he wrote his epistles to the churches of Asia, and the revelation of future events, which he had received from the Lord. Some there are who place these events much earlier, under the reign of Claudius, but the former opinion seems most probable, and best supported by the testimony of the ancients; but the story of his having been cast into a caldron of boiling oil, in the presence, as some add, of the Roman senate, does not seem supported by any tolerable evidence. It is believed that he gained his liberty from banishment, and returned to Ephesus, or the neighbouring parts; that he afterwards wrote his Gospel a little before his death, which is supposed to have happened about the last year of the century. If so, he was probably about a hundred years of age, and survived the rest of the apostles a considerable space.

Domitian, having made the earth groan under his cruelties and excesses, was assassinated in the sixteenth year of his reign, [A. D. 96.] Nerva succeeded, (a man of much fairer character,) who repealed the sanguinary edicts of his predecessor; and it does not appear that the Christians were generally persecuted during his short government. Before his death, (for he did not live two years,) he adopted Trajan for his successor, who came to the empire [A. D. 98] with a general approbation, and is still reputed one of the best and wisest princes that Rome was favoured with. From his conduct, and that of some of the following emperors, it appeared that the Gospel of Christ was not only hated by such persons as Nero and Domitian, who seemed professed enemies to every thing that was good and praiseworthy, but that men who desired to be thought the patrons of virtue, and to act upon the most benevolent principles, had objections equally strong against it; for if Trajan did not issue edicts expressly against the Christians, there was a very sharp persecution carried on against them in his reign; and when Pliny (in an epistle still extant) represented to him the greatness of their sufferings, and the multitude and inno-

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oence of the sufferers, the emperor interposed no further, by his answer, than to forbid informations against them, upon suspicion, to be encouraged; but directed, that such as were proved to be Christians, and refused to join in the Heathen sacrifices, should suffer death: and when he visited Asia, Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch, being brought before him, he condemned him, with his own mouth, to be sent to Rome to be devoured by wild beasts. But we shall resume the account of what happened under his reign hereafter, his second or third year [A. D. 100] coinciding, according to the generally received computation, with the end of the first century, which I have fixed as the limit of our researches in the present volume.

But before I conclude the chapter, it may be useful to enquire what might be the motives which influenced the Heathens so eagerly to embrace every occasion of showing their displeasure against the professors of Christianity.

The original and proper cause of the injurious treatment the first Christians met with from the Heathens, and particularly from the Roman government, which usually tolerated every kind of religious worship that did not interfere with the public tranquility, and the obedience due to the state, was one that is of an abiding and universal influence, namely, that enmity of the carnal heart which cannot be brought to submit to the wisdom and will of God. This has been the secret source of all the persecution which has been the lot of the true disciples of Christ in every age. The sublime doctrines of the Gospel were offensive to the pretended wisdom of men, and the spirituality of its precepts no less thwarted their passions.—Men, if only left to themselves, cannot but oppose a system which, at the same time that it reduces all their boasted distinctions of character to a perfect level in point of acceptance with God, enjoins a life and conversation absolutely inconsistent with the customs and pursuits which universally prevail, and brands many of the most allowed and authorized practices with the hard names of wickedness and folly. But they are not left to themselves; but are, in a degree they are little aware of, under the influence of Satan, who, for the power he maintains and exerts over them, is styled, in Scripture, 'the god of this world.' Since their own evil dispositions are thus instigated by the great enemy of God and goodness, it is entirely owing to the powerful restraints of the providence of the Most High, that his servants can, at any time, or in any place, enjoy an interval of rest; and though he has always made good his promise in favour of his church, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; though they who oppose it successively perish and leave their schemes unfinished, while the inter-

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est against which they rage triumphs over all their attacks, and subsists, revives, and flourishes amidst the changes which sweep away almost the remembrance of the most prosperous human establishments; yet he is pleased, for wise reasons, to permit them to try what they can do. Hereby the faith and patience of his people are strengthened and displayed, his care over them illustrated, and those who are sincerely devoted to him are evidently distinguished from hypocrites and pretenders, who join in an outward attachment to his Gospel in times of prosperity, but are presently wearied and disgusted when storms and troubles arise.

Amongst the more particular reasons why Christianity was obnoxious to the Heathens, not only to persons of vile character, as Nero, but to such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, who are, even to this day, highly extolled for their probity and discernment, we may mention these that follow: and more than one of them may be easily accommodated to similar events which stand upon the records of history, down to our times, and their effects will probably be felt by many who are yet unborn.

1. The doctrine of the cross perhaps was, and always will be, the capital offence. The Christians professed to place all their hopes on the actions and sufferings of one who died, to all appearance, like a common malefactor. This, considered in one view, was thought such a kind and degree of infatuation, as provoked the most sovereign and universal contempt; and, in another view, it raised a grave concern for the interests of morality and virtue in those whose pride was flattered by their own empty declamations on those sounding topics. Every thing that was evil, they thought, might be expected from men who openly declared that they hoped for eternal happiness, not for their own works, which in this connexion they depreciated and renounced, but on account of the righteousness and mediation of another. If it was possible that Christians could maintain that course of conduct which the Gospel requires, and at the same time conceal the principles and motives on which they act, they might, perhaps, come off more easily with the world; for the justice, temperance, goodness, and truth, which become their high calling, are suited to conciliate peace with all men. But their principles must not, cannot, be concealed. Those who know and love Jesus, and are sensible of their immense obligations to him, will glory in him, and in him only; they will avow, that it is not by their own power or holiness that they escape the pollutions of the world, but that they derive all their strength from faith in his blood, and from the supports of his grace. They dare not conceal this, nor do they desire it, though they are sensible that the world, whether it

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bears the name of Heathen or Christian, will hate and despise them for it.

2. The Romans, though attached to their old system of idolatry, were not averse to the admission of new divinities, upon the ground of what a modern writer calls a spirit of intercommunity; that is, every one had liberty to adopt what worship he pleased, provided due honour was given to the ancient establishments.—The votaries of the Egyptian, Roman, and Syrian deities, while they paid some peculiar regard to their own favourites, indulged each other in a mutual acknowledgment of the rest; but the religion of Jesus was absolutely incompatible with them all, would admit of no competition, and his followers could not avoid declaring, upon all occasions, that 'they were no gods that were made with hands.' On this account they were considered as a most uncharitable, proud, and narrowhearted sect; as the Jews, for the same reason, had been before them. And thus it will always be. Nothing will more effectually secure a man in the peaceful possession of his own errors, than his pleadings for the indifference of error in general, and allowing those who most widely differ from him to be all right in their own way; and this lukewarm comprehension, which is a principal part of that pretended candour and charity for which our own times are so remarkable, preserves a sort of intercourse or confederacy amongst multitudes, who are hardly agreed in any one thing but their joint opposition to the spirit and design of the Gospel. But they who love the truth cannot but declare against every deviation from it; they are obliged to decline the proposed intercommunity, and to vindicate the commands and institutions of God from the inventions and traditions of men: they not only build for themselves upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, but they are free to profess their belief, that 'other foundation can no man lay;' that 'there is no other name given under heaven by which a sinner can be saved,' and that none can have an interest in this same but by that faith which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world: therefore they always have been, and always will be, hated, as uncharitable and censorious; and are sure to be treated accordingly, so far as opportunity and circumstances will permit those who think themselves aggrieved, to discover their resentment.

3. The wisest and most respectable characters among the Heathen rulers, either for reasons of state, or from their own superstition, were generally the most solicitous to preserve the old religion from innovations. The history of mankind furnishes us with frequent proofs, that persons, in other respects of the greatest penetration and genius, have often been as blindly devoted to the

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absurdities of a false religion as the weakest among the vulgar; or, if they had seen the folly of many things that have the sanction of antiquity and custom, yet the maxims of a false policy, and that supposed connexion and alliance between the established religion and the welfare of the state, which has been instilled into them from their infancy, induce them to think it their interest, if not their duty, to keep up the same exterior, and to leave things as they found them. Trajan seems to have been influenced by these considerations. He was zealous for the Heathen system, in which he had been educated, and regarded it (as the Romans were accustomed to do) as the basis, or at least the chief security of the government. The Christians, therefore, were to be punished, not only for their obstinacy in maintaining their own opinions, but as being eventually enemies to the state; for though their conduct was peaceable, and they paid a cheerful obedience to laws and governors, while they did not interfere with that obedience they owed to Christ, their supreme Lord, yet their doctrines, which struck at the very root of idolatry, made them accounted dangerous to society, and deserving to be exterminated from it.

4. These suspicions were strengthened by the great success and spread the Gospel obtained in this first century. Within the compass of a few years it had extended to almost every part of the Roman empire. In this view it appeared formidable, and called for a speedy and vigorous suppression, before it should become quite insuperable by the accession of fresh strength and numbers. But the event did not answer their expectation. Believers grew and multiplied, in defiance of all the cruelties exercised upon them: the numbers and constancy of the sufferers, and the gentle spirit of meekness, forgiveness, and love, which they discovered, often made lasting impressions upon the people, sometimes upon their tormentors and judges; and, by the blessing of God upon their doctrine, thus powerfully recommended by their conduct, and sealed by their blood, new converts were continually added to the church.

5. When it was thus determined to extirpate, if possible, these odious and dangerous people, pretexts and occasions were always ready; slanderous reports concerning their tenets and assemblies were industriously promoted and willingly believed. Some of these took their rise from misapprehension; some were probably invented by those who apostatized from the church, who, to justify themselves, as well as to evince their sincerity, pretended to make discoveries of horrid evils that prevailed amongst them, under the disguise of religion. Many, who would not have invented such stories themselves, were, however, well pleased to circu-

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late what they had heard, and took it for granted that every thing was true which confirmed the opinion they had before entertained of this pestilential and despicable sect. But neither violence nor calumny could prevail against the cause and people of God and his Christ: they were supported by an almighty arm; and though many had the honour to lay down their lives in this glorious cause, many more were preserved by his providence in the most dangerous circumstances.

The Gospel of Christ, though contradictory to the received opinions, laws, customs, and pursuits of every place where it appeared, though unsupported either by arts or arms, though opposed by power and policy on every side, in a space of about sixty-six years from our Lord's ascension, (according to the promise he gave his disciples,) had spread successively from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth. Christians were to be found in every province where the Roman power ruled, and in most of their principal cities; and though not many noble, mighty, or wise were called, yet some there were, and the power of the grace of Jesus was displayed in every rank of life. Courtiers, senators, and commanders, notwithstanding the difficulty of their situation, were not ashamed of his cross; and some of the learned obtained that peace and happiness, by embracing his Gospel, which they had sought, to no purpose, in the vain intricacies of a false philosphy. Nor was the success of the Gospel confined within the limits of the Roman empire, but extended eastward to Parthia and Babylon, where the Roman eagles were not acknowledged. We are not sure, however, that there were many collected societies of Christians in every province, or that those societies were, in general, very numerous.—Those parts of Asia and Greece which had been the scene of St. Paul's labours, seem to have had the greatest number of settled churches in proportion to their extent; and their largest assemblies were probably in their principal cities, such as Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. But we have reason to believe, from our Lord's own declarations, that real Christians, in the most flourishing times* of the church, have been very few, in comparison with the many who chose the broad and beaten road which leads to destruction: but these few are, under his conduct and blessing, as the salt of the earth, and are, therefore, scattered far and wide, according to the disposal of his wise providence, who appoints the time of their birth and the bounds of their habitation.

If, by the epithet *primitive*, we mean that period during which the professed churches of Christ preserved their faith and prac-

* Matt. vii. 13, 14.

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tice remarkably pure, and uninfluenced by the spirit and maxims of the world, we cannot extend it far beyond the first century.—We are sure that a mournful declension prevailed very early, and quickly spread, like a contagion, far and wide; and, indeed, the seeds of those evils, which afterwards produced such a plentiful harvest of scandals and mischiefs, were already sown, and began to spring up, while the apostles were yet living. And we shall show hereafter, that the first and purest age of the church was not free from such blemishes as have been observable in all succeeding revivals of true religion. These things are to be guarded against with the utmost attention, but they will more or less appear while human nature continues in its present state of infirmity. While the professors of Christianity were few in comparison of their opponents, while they were chiefly poor and obscure persons, and had sharp persecutions to grapple with, so long they preserved the integrity and purity of their profession in general, and the disorders which appeared among them were faithfully and successfully opposed and corrected; afflictions and sufferings kept them firmly united in a love to the truth, and to each other; but when they were favoured with intervals of peace, and the increase of numbers and riches seemed to give them a more fixed establishment in the world, they were soon corrupted, and that beautiful simplicity, which is the characteristic of genuine Christianity, was obscured by will-worship and vain reasonings. Amongst the multitude who abandoned idolatry, and embraced the Christian faith, there were several who had borne the specious name of philosophers. Some of these, on the one hand, laboured to retain as many of their favourite sentiments as they could, by any means, reconcile to the views they had formed of the Gospel; and, on the other hand, they endeavoured, if possible, to accommodate the Christian scheme to the taste and prejudices of the times, in hopes thereby to make it more generally acceptable.—Thus the doctrines of the scripture were adulterated by those within the church, and misrepresented to those without. Perhaps the first alterations of this kind were not attempted with a bad intention, or extended to the most important points; but the precedent was dangerous; for the progress of error, like that of sin, is from small beginnings to awful and unthought-of consequences. Gospel-truth, like a bank opposed to a torrent, must be preserved entire, to be useful: if a breach is once made, though it may seem at first to be small, none but He who says to the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further,' can set bounds to the threatening inundation that will quickly follow. In effect, a very considerable deviation from the plan of the apostles had taken place in

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the churches before the decease of some who had personally conversed with them.

We have no ecclesiastical book of this age extant worthy of notice, except that called the First of the Two Epistles to the Corinthians, which are ascribed to Clement, bishop of Rome, who is supposed to be the Clement mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans. This epistle is not unsuitable to the character of the time when it was written, and contains many useful things; yet it is not (as we have it) free from fault, and, at the best, deserves no higher commendation than a pious, well-meant performance. It stands first, both in point of time and merit, in the list of those writings which bear the name of the apostolical fathers; for the rest of them, if the genuine productions of the persons whose names they bear, were composed in the second century. For as to the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, St. Paul's companion, those who are strangers to the arguments by which many learned men have demonstrated it to be spurious, may be convinced only by reading it, if they are in any measure acquainted with the true spirit of the apostle's writings. We are, indeed, assured, that both the epistles of Clement, this which bears the name of Barnabas, several said to have been written by Ignatius, (the authenticity of which has likewise been disputed,) one by Polycarp, and the book called the Shepherd of Hermas, which is filled with visionary fables, were all in high esteem in the first ages of the church, were read in their public assemblies, and considered as little inferior to the canonical writings; which may be pleaded as one proof of what I have advanced concerning that declension of spiritual taste and discernment which soon prevailed; for I think I may venture to say there are few, if any, of the Protestant churches but have furnished authors whose writings (I mean the writings of some one author) have far surpassed all the apostolical fathers taken together, and that not only in point of method and accuracy, but in scriptural knowledge, solid judgment, and a just application of evangelical doctrine to the purposes of edification and obedience.

But though the first Christians were men subject to passion and infirmities, like ourselves, and were far from deserving or desiring that undistinguishing admiration and implicit submission to all their sentiments, which were paid them by the ignorance and superstition of after-times; yet they were eminent for faith, love, self-denial, and a just contempt of the world; multitudes of them cheerfully witnessed to the truth with their blood, and, by their steadfastness and patience under trials, and their harmony among themselves, often extorted honourable testimonies even from their opposers. Could they have transmitted their spirit,

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together with their name, to succeeding generations, the face of ecclesiastical history would have been very different from what it now bears; but, by degrees, the love of novelty and the thirst of power, a relaxed attention to the precepts of Christ, and an undue regard to the names, authority, and pretensions of men, introduced those confusions, contentions, and enormities, which at length issued in an almost universal apostasy from that faith and course of practice which alone are worthy the name of Christianity. The prosecution of this subject, more especially with a view to the history of the favoured few who were preserved from the general contagion, and of the treatment they met with who had the courage to censure or withstand the abuses of the times they lived in, will be attempted in the following volume of this work, if God, in whose hands our times are, is pleased to afford opportunity; and if the specimen presented to the public, in this volume, should so far meet the approbation of competent judges, as to encourage the author to proceed.

Some particulars which may conduce to render the state of the church in the first century more evident to the reader, as well as to give light into the true state of religion amongst ourselves, and which could not be well introduced in the course of our narration, without making too frequent and too long digressions, I have, for that reason, treated of separately in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER II.

An Essay on the Character of St. Paul, considered as an Exemplar or Pattern of a Minister of Jesus Christ.

The success with which the first promulgation of the Gospel was attended, is to be ultimately ascribed to the blessing and operation of the Holy Spirit; and the great means which the Spirit of God is pleased to accompany with an efficacious power upon the souls of men, is the subject-matter of the Gospel itself. He concurs with no other doctrine but that of the Scripture. The most laboured endeavours to produce a moral change of heart and conduct will always prove ineffectual, unless accommodated to the principles of revelation, respecting the ruin of the human nature by sin, and the only possible method of its recovery by Jesus Christ.

And as the Holy Spirit bears witness to no other doctrine, so he ordinarily restrains his blessing to those ministers who have

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themselves experienced the power of the truths which they deliver to others. A man may be systematically right, and strenuous in the delivery and defence of orthodox notions; yet if he is not in some degree possessed of the dispositions and motives which become a minister of the New Testament, he will seldom be honoured with much success or acceptance. The want of that disinterested and dependent frame of mind which the Gospel inculcates on all who profess it, will render his labours insignificant; for the Holy Spirit, on whose influence success entirely depends, will seldom co-operate with any but those who are sincerely governed by his precepts.

A great stress, therefore, is laid in the New Testament upon the principles, tempers, and conduct which ought to distinguish the men who have the honour to be intrusted with the important charge of preaching the Gospel of Christ. To delineate their proper character, and to form their manners suitable to their high calling, is the principal scope of the epistles to Timothy and Titus. And when we consider what we read there, in connexion with many passages to the same purpose, which occur occasionally in the inspired writings, we may well adopt the apostle's words, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' A Christian, even in private life, is exposed to innumerable snares and dangers, from his situation in an evil world, the power and subtilty of his spiritual enemies, and the influence of his body of sin in himself, which, though weakened and despoiled of dominion, is not yet destroyed. A minister of the Gospel, besides these trials, in common with other Christians, has many peculiar to himself. His services are more difficult, his temptations more various, his conduct more noticed; many eyes are upon him—some enviously watching for his halting, and some perhaps too readily proposing him as a pattern, and content to adopt whatever has the sanction of his example. If encouraged and acceptable, he is in danger of being greatly hurt by popularity and the favour of friends; if opposed and ill treated, (and this he must expect in some instances if he is faithful,) he is liable either to be surprised into anger and impatience, or to sink into dejection ond fear. It is therefore a great encouragement to find from Scripture (and not from Scripture only) how the grace of God has enabled others, in equal circumstances of danger and temptation, to rise superior to all impediments, and to maintain such a course of conduct, that they stand proposed as proper patterns for our imitation, and call upon us to be followers of them, as they were of Christ.

Amongst these the character of St. Paul shines with a superior lustre; he stands distinguished by the eminence of his know-

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ledge, grace, labours, and success, as a noble and animating exemplar of a minister of Jesus Christ. And if it should be thought a digression from the design of an ecclesiastical history, to allot a few pages to the consideration of his principles, and the uniform tenour of his life, yet I hope the digression will not be unprofitable in itself, nor judged unsuitable to my general plan; for I proposed not to confine myself to a dry detail of facts, but to point out the genuine tendency of the Gospel where it is truly received and the spirit by which it is opposed, and to show the impossibility of reviving practical godliness by any other means than those which were so signally successful in the first age of the church.

Was I to exhibit any recent character with these views, the exceptions of partiality and prejudice would not be so easily obviated. The merits of such a character, however commendable upon the whole, would be objected to, and the incidental infirmities and indiscretions of the person (for the best are not wholly free from blemish) would be studiously collected and exaggerated, as a sufficient contrast to all that could be said in his praise. But modesty forbids the same open disingenuous treatment of one who was an apostle of Christ. Besides, he lived and died long ago; and as some learned men have found, or pretended to find a way to reconcile his writings with the prevailing taste of the times, he is commended in general terms, and claimed as a patron, by all parties of the religious world. Therefore I am warranted to take it for granted, that none who profess the name of Christians will be angry with me for attempting to place his spirit and conduct in as full a light as I can, or for proposing him as a proper criterion, whereby to judge of the merits and pretensions of all who account themselves ministers of Christ.

Many things worthy our notice and imitation have occurred concerning this apostle, whilst we were tracing that part of his history which St. Luke has given us in the Acts; but I would now attempt a more exact delineation of his character, as it is further exemplified in his own epistles, or may be illustrated from a review of what has been occasionally mentioned before.

We may observe much of the wisdom of God in disposing the circumstances in which his people are placed previous to their conversion. They only begin to know Him when he is pleased to reveal himself to them by his grace, but he knew them long before. He determines the hour of their birth, their situation in life, and their earliest connexions; he watches over their childhood and youth, and preserves them from innumerable evils and dangers into which their follies, while in a state of ignorance and sin, might plunge them: and he permits their inclinations to take

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such a course, that, when he is pleased to call them to the knowledge of his truth, many consequences of their past conduct, and the reflections they make upon them, may concur, upon the whole, in a subserviency to fit them for the services into which he designs to lead them afterwards. Thus he leads the blind by a way that they knew not; and often, for the manifestation of his wisdom, power, and grace, in bringing good out of evil, he, for a season, gives them up so far to the effects of their own depravity, that, in the judgment of men, none seem more unlikely to be the subjects of his grace, than some of those whom he has purposed not only to save from ruin, but to make instrumental to the salvation of others. I doubt not but some of my readers, who are acquainted with their own hearts, will easily apply this observation to themselves; but there are instances in which the contrast is so striking and strong, that it will be made for them by those who know them. It is, however, peculiarly exemplified in the case of St. Paul. He was set apart from the womb, (as he himself tells us,*) to be a chosen instrument of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. The frame of his heart, and the manner of his life, the profession he had made, and the services in which he was engaged before his conversion, were evidently suited to render him an unsuspected as well as a zealous witness to the truth and power of the Gospel, after he had embraced it. The Lord's purpose was to show the insufficiency of all legal appointments and human attainments, the power of his grace in subduing the strongest prejudices, and the riches of his mercy in pardoning the most violent attempts against his Gospel. We know not how this purpose could have been more effectually answered, in a single instance, than by making choice of our apostle; who had been possessed of every advantage that can be imagined, exclusive of the Gospel, and, in consequence of these advantages, had made the most pertinacious efforts to suppress it. He was born a Jew, bred up under Gamaliel, a chief of the Pharisees,† the sect which professed the most peculiar attachment to the law of Moses. His conduct, before he became a Christian, was undoubtedly moral, if we understand morality in that lean and confined sense which it too frequently bears among ourselves, as signifying no more than an exemption from gross vices; together with a round of outward duties performed in a mercenary, servile spirit, to soothe conscience, and purchase the favour of God. While he was thus busied in observing the letter of the law, he tells us, he was alive—that is, he pleased himself in his own attainments, doubted not of his ability to please God, and that his state was safe and

* Gal. i. 15. † Phil. iii.

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good. Upon these principles, (which act uniformly upon all who are governed by them,) his heart was filled with enmity against the doctrines and people of Jesus; and his blinded conscience taught him that it was his duty to oppose them. He was a willing witness at the death of Stephen;* and from a spectator, soon became a distinguished actor in the like tragedies. Such is the unavoidable gradation, in a state of nature, from bad to worse. The excess and effects of his rage are described by St. Luke, in very lively colours, and he often acknowledges it in his epistles; for though the Lord forgave him, he knew not how to forgive himself for having persecuted and wasted the church of God;† he made havock of the disciples, like a lion or a wolf amongst a flock of sheep, pressing into their houses, sparing none, not even women. Thus he was filled with the hateful spirit of persecution, which is undistinguishing and unrelenting. The mischiefs he could do in Jerusalem not being sufficient to gratify his unsatiable cruelty and thirst of blood, he obtained, (as has been formerly observed,) a commission from the high priest to harass the disciples at Damascus. In this journey, when he was near the city, he was suddenly struck to the ground by the voice and appearance of the Lord Jesus. From that hour a memorable change took place in his heart and views; and, having been baptized by Ananias, and received a free pardon of all his wickedness, with a commission to the apostolic office, he began to preach that faith which before he had so industriously laboured to destroy. In this new light we are now to consider him; and whatever might be reasonably expected from a sense of such a display of grace and mercy, in his behalf, we shall find manifested in the subsequent course of his life. Happy are those who come the nearest to such an exemplary pattern!

I. The characteristic excellence of St. Paul, which was as the spring or source of every other grace, was the ardency of the supreme love he bore to his Lord and Saviour. It would not be easy to find many periods throughout his epistles which do not evidence the fulness of his heart in this respect. He seems delighted even with the sound of the name of Jesus, so that, regardless of the cold rules of studied composition, we find him repeating it ten times in the compass of ten successive verses.‡ He was so struck with the just claim the Saviour had to every heart, that he accounted a want of love to him the highest pitch of ingratitude and wickedness, and deserving the utmost severity of wrath and ruin.§ When he was conscious that, for his unwearied ap-

* Acts xxii. 20.
† Gal. i. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 9.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 1—10.
§ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

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plication to the service of the Gospel, in defiance of the many dangers and deaths which awaited him in every place, he appeared to many as one beside himself, and transported beyond the bounds of sober reason; he thought it a sufficient apology to say, 'The love of Christ, constrains us;'* we are content to be fools for his sake, to be despised so he may be honoured, to be nothing in ourselves that he may be all in all. He had such a sense of the glorious, invaluable excellence of the person of Christ, of his adorable condescension in taking the nature and curse of sinners upon himself, and his complete suitableness and sufficiency, as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people, that he often seems at a loss for words answerable to the emotions of his heart; and when he has exhausted the powers of language, and astonished his readers with his inimitable energy, he intimates a conviction of his inability to do justice to a subject, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of which are too great for our feeble capacities to grasp. But, besides these general views, he was particularly affected with the exceeding abundant love and grace of Christ to himself, when he reflected on the circumstances in which the Lord had found him, and the great things he had done for him. That he who had before been a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, should be forgiven, accepted as a child of God, intrusted with the ministry of the Gospel, and appointed to everlasting salvation, was indeed an instance of wonderful grace. So it appeared to himself, and at the thought of it he often seems to forget his present subject, and breaks forth into inimitable digressions to the praise of Him who had loved him, and given himself for him. Happily convinced of the tendency and efficacy of this principle in himself, he proposes it to others, instead of a thousand arguments, whenever he would inculcate the most unreserved obedience to the whole will of God, or stir up believers to a holy diligence in adorning the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things; and his exhortations to the conscientious discharge of the various duties of relative life, are generally enforced by this grand motive. In a word, at all times, and in all places, the habitual and favourite subject that employed his thoughts, his tongue, and his pen, was the love of Christ.

Supported and animated by this love, he exerted himself to the utmost, in promoting the knowledge of him whom he loved, and bearing testimony to his power and grace. Nothing could dishearten, or weary, or terrify, or bribe him from his duty; and this must and will be universally, the leading principle of a faithful minister. Should a man possess the tongue of men and angels, the finest

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

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genius, and the most admired accomplishments, if he is not constrained and directed by the love of Christ, he will either do nothing, or nothing to the purpose; he will be unable to support either the frowns or the smiles of the world; his studies and endeavours will certainly be influenced by low and selfish views. Interest or a desire of applause may stimulate him to shine as a scholar, a critic, or a philosopher; but, till the love of Christ rules in his heart, he will neither have inclination nor power to exert himself for the glory of God, or the good of souls.

II. The inseparable effect, and one of the surest evidences of love to Christ, is a love to his people. Of this likewise our apostle exhibits an instructive and affecting example. The warmth and cordiality of his love to those who loved his Lord and Master, appear in every page of his writings. He so rejoiced in their prosperity, that to hear of it, at any time, made him in a manner forget his own sorrows,* when encompassed with troubles on every side; and though, in many instances, he did not meet that grateful return he had reason to expect, yet he could not be discouraged; but when we had occasion to expostulate with some upon this account, he adds, 'I will still gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more I love you the less I am loved.'† Of such a generous temper as this, the world, would they observe it, must acknowledge, (as the magicians in Egypt,) 'This is the finger of God;' for nothing but his grace can produce a conduct so contrary to the natural inclination of man, as to persevere and increase in kindness and affection to those who persevere in requiting it with coldness and ingratitude. His epistles to the Thessalonians abound in such expressions and strains of tenderness as would doubtless be generally admired, (especially by those who can read them in the original,) were they not overlooked, through the unhappy disregard which too many show to that best of books in which they are contained. When he is appealing to themselves concerning the sincerity of his conduct, and how far he had been from abusing his authority, he says, 'We were gentle among you, even as a nurse (or mother) cherisheth her children,' who, by her tender and assiduous offices, supplies their inability to take care of themselves.‡ (It would be well if all who have aimed to derive

* 2 Cor. vii. 7. 13. See likewise Phil. ii. 28. which finely intimates his tenderness and affection. He was oppressed with sorrow upon sorrow, yet he felt more for the Philippians than for himself. He mourned over Epaphroditus, when sick, for their sakes, and sent him away for their comfort when recovered; and this he did as the most effectual means to lessen his own burden, by sympathizing in that joy his friends would have in the interview, though he could not directly partake with them.

† 2 Cor. xii. 15.

‡ 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

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a plenitude of power from the example of the apostle, were equally desirous to imitate him in the use of it.) He then adds, 'So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.' No comment can do justice to the spirit of this sentiment, or to the force of the expression in the Greek. In another passage, which is rendered in our version, 'We being taken from you,' the original term* has an emphasis which no single word in our language can answer. It imports such a state of separation as is made between the parent and a child by the death of either, when the child is left a helpless and exposed orphan, or the parent is bereaved of the staff and comfort of his age. It beautifully intimates the endearing affection which subsisted between the apostles and the persons he was writing to; and demonstrates the greatest tenderness, simplicity, and condescension. But his regard went beyond words, and was evidenced by the whole course of his actions. Nor was it confined to those who had enjoyed the benefits of his personal ministry; his heart was charged with the care and welfare of all the churches; and those who had not seen his face in the flesh had an unceasing share in his solicitude and prayers;† nay, so strong was his love to the churches, that it balanced his habitual desire to be with Christ; he could not determine which was most eligible, to suffer with the members upon earth, (so that he might be serviceable to them,) or to reign with the Head in heaven.‡ In the passage referred to, we see the happy centripetal and centrifugal forces which carried him on through the circle of duty; he constantly tended and gravitated to his centre of rest; but successive opportunities of usefulness and service drew him off, and made him willing to wait yet longer.

In this part of his character we are not to consider him exclusively as an apostle. All who have truly known the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, are partakers of the same spirit, according to the measure of their faith. That person is unworthy the name of a Christian who does not feel a concern and affection for his brethren who are in the world. It must be allowed that prejudices and misapprehensions too often prevent the Lord's people from knowing each other; but, so far as they believe a person to be a child of God through faith, they cannot but love him. This is the immutable criterion which our Lord himself has given, whereby his real disciples are to be known and acknowledged.‖ He has not directed us to judge by their discourses, their

* Ἀπορφανισθέντες, 1 Thes. ii. 17.
† Phil. i. 23, 24.
† Col. ii. 1.
‖ John xiii. 35.

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knowledge, or even their zeal, but by the evidence they give of mutual love; and we may as easily conceive of a sun without light, or a cause without an effect, as of a person duly affected with a sense of the glory of God, and the love of Christ, and not proportionably filled with a spirit of love to all who are like-minded. But especially this disposition is essential to a minister of the Gospel, and the apostle assures us that all imaginable qualifications are of no avail without it; though we could possess the powers of a prophet or an angel, or the zeal of a martyr, if we are destitute of this love, we are, in the sight of God, but as sounding brass,* or a tinkling cymbal.

III. St. Paul's inflexible attachment to the great doctrines of the Gospel is another part of his character which deserves our attention. He knew their worth, experienced their power in his own soul, and saw that, though they were unacceptable to the wisdom of the world, they bore the impress of the manifold wisdom of God. He takes notice that, in those early days, there were many who 'corrupted' the word of God.† The word properly signifies to adulterate, to imitate the practice of dishonest vintners, who mix and sophisticate their liquors, so that, though the colour is preserved, and the taste perhaps nearly counterfeited, the quality and properties are quite altered and depraved: but he says, 'We are not as they.' He preached the Gospel in its purity and simplicity, the sincere, genuine milk of the word,‡ neither weakened by water, nor disguised by any artful sweetening to render it more palatable. He added nothing of his own, nor employed any art or gloss to palliate the truth, that he might be more acceptable to men of carnal minds. As he was not ashamed of it, neither was he afraid lest it should fall without success to the ground, if not supported and assisted by inventions of his own. He knew whose word it was, and therefore cheerfully ventured the issue with him, who alone could procure it a welcome reception; and as he disdained the thought of deviating a tittle himself from the plain and full declaration of the truth, neither could he bear, no, not for an hour, with those who presumed to do so.‖ I doubt not but the warmth of his zeal, in this respect, has disgusted many in the present day, wherein a seeming candour and forbearance is pleaded for and extended to almost every sentiment, except the truths in which St. Paul gloried. There is little doubt but many,

* 'Sounding brass,' without meaning and without life. Such are the most specious gifts and performances, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love. They may, perhaps, be useful to others, (as the sound of a bell gives notice and brings people together,) but the possessor himself is a lifeless instrument; he designs no good, and will receive no reward.

† Καπηλευοντες. 2 Cor. ii. 17. ‡ Αδολον γαλα. 1 Pet. ii. 2. ‖ Gal. ii. 5.

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if they had the courage and honesty to speak out, would add St. Paul himself to the list of those whom they despise as uncharitable and hot-brained bigots; for who has offended more than he against the rules of that indifference to error which is at present miscalled charity? The Galatians, in a short time after he left them, had ventured to admit some alteration in the doctrine they had received from him: it was chiefly in one point. They had been persuaded into an undue regard for the law of Moses.—This, some may think, was little more than a circumstantial; that it could not have any great or direct influence upon their moral practice, and that they might be very good men and good Christians, though, in this one thing, they could not see exactly with their teacher's eyes. But how different was the apostle's judgment! If the Galatians had returned to the practice of idolatry, or broke out into the most scandalous immoralities, he could hardly have expressed his surprise and grief in stronger terms. He changes his usual manner of address, and speaks to them as a senseless people,* under the power of some unaccountable fascination. He tells them, that, by admitting such an addition,† small and inconsiderable as they might think it, they had, in effect, received another Gospel: which was, however, so enervated and despoiled of efficacy, that it was, more properly speaking, become no Gospel at all, utterly unworthy the least pretence to the name. Further, he denounces an anathema (the highest curse) upon any person who should dare to preach any such pretended Gospel, even though, if such a thing were possible, it should be himself, or an angel from heaven; and this denunciation he immediately repeats, lest it should be thought that he spoke rather from warmth of temper than from a just sense of the importance of the case. What would some of my readers think of a man who should, at this time, express himself in terms like these? But let it be remembered that our apostle, who was so ready with an anathema upon this occasion, and who in another place, passes the same severe judgment‡ upon any man who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, was far from speaking thus from emotions of anger and ill-will. The disposition of his own mind, the tender concern with which he viewed the worst of sinners, may be judged of from his willingness to be made an anathema himself,‖ after the manner of Christ, if, by all he could suffer, he might be a means of saving the Jews, who were his worst enemies, and from whom he had constantly received the most unjust and cruel treatment. But when the cause of the Gospel and the honour of Christ were in question, he could not, he durst not, consult with the feelings

* Gal. iii. 1. † Gal. i. 6—9. ‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 22. ‖ Rom. ix. 3.

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of flesh and blood; but, as the minister and messenger of the Lord, he solemnly declared what must, and will, be the awful consequence of neglecting or corrupting the word of life.

Every faithful minister of the Gospel is possessed of a degree of the same attention to the purity of the truth and faith once delivered to the saints. They must not deviate from their instructions, nor can they behold with indifference the specious attempts of others to mislead the unwary. They know what censures they must expect upon this account: it is sufficient for them that they can appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that though, as the servants of Christ, they dare not aim to please men, by speaking smooth things, yet they act from principles of benevolence and love, and would rejoice in the salvation of their greatest opposers. The world, perhaps, would judge more favourably of them if they knew all, if they were witnesses to the prayers and tears which they pour out for them in secret, and the emotions of mind they feel when they are constrained to declare the more awful parts of their message; but, as ministers, and in their public work, they cannot avoid pointing out the danger of those who venture their souls and eternal hopes upon any other doctrine than that which St. Paul preached.

IV. But though St. Paul was so tenacious of the great foundation-truths of the Gospel, and would not admit or connive at any doctrine that interfered with them, he exercised, upon all occasions, a great tenderness to weak consciences, in matters that were not essential to the faith, and when the scruples were owing rather to a want of clear light than to obstinacy. This was evident in his conduct with regard to the great controversy that soon took place between the Jewish and Gentile converts, about the distinction of meats and drinks, and other rituals enjoined by the law of Moses; the obligation* of which, many, who had been educated in the practice of those observances, did not immediately see were superseded by the Gospel of Christ. He knew and asserted his own liberty; yet, in condescension to the weakness of others, he often abridged himself of it, and declared, that, rather than grieve or cause offence to a weak brother, he would eat no meat while the world stood. His practice herein will probably be of general application, *mutatis mutandis*, so long as the present state of human infirmity subsists. A defect in knowledge, the prejudices of education and custom, the remains of a legal spirit, the influence of great names, and other causes of a like nature, will probably always operate, so far as to keep up lesser differences in judgment and practice amongst those who agree in

* Rom. xiv.

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the great and fundamental truths. The enemy gains too much advantage from these things not to improve such differences into divisions. Self is too prevalent in the best men, and the tendency of self is, to exact submission, to hurry to extremes, to exaggerate trifles into points of great consequence, and to render us averse to the healing expedients of peace. From these sources, discords and evils innumerable have been multiplied and perpetuated among the various denominations under which the Lord's people have been ranged, which have greatly hindered the welfare and progress of the common cause, and exposed each contending party to the scorn of their real enemies. But were the spirit and conduct of our apostle more adopted, many debates would entirely cease; and in those things where a difference of judgment would still subsist, the exercise of patience, gentleness, and mutual forbearance, would, perhaps, afford fairer occasion for the display of the Christian character, than if we were all exactly of a mind. Then the strong would bear the infirmities of the weak, the one would not censure nor the other despise; nor would those whose minds have been enlarged by a variety of experience and observation, think it at all strange, much less would they be angry, if others, who have not had the same advantages, cannot immediately enter into all their sentiments. St. Paul, in knowledge, abilities, and usefulness, was eminently superior to all those among whom he chiefly conversed; and, as an apostle, he had a stronger right than any man since the apostle's day could have, to exact an implicit deference and submission; but he had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master, and we are concerned to follow him, as he followed Christ, in the exercise of tenderness to the weakest of the flock.

It is not my present business to define what are properly essentials in the Christian religion, and to separate them clearly from the less important points, which, for that reason, and in contradistinction to the other, are called circumstantials. This would lead me too far: though, perhaps, it would not be so difficult as a person might at first expect, who should be told of all that has been written, with little satisfaction, upon the subject. I foresee a future period in our history, when a disquisition of this kind will be almost necessary; and, if I am spared to reach so far, I shall probably embrace the occasion. In the mean time, I would just hint an observation or two on this head, which the intelligent reader, if he thinks them just, may apply as he sees proper.

1. Circumstantials and essentials in religion, (if we speak with propriety,) are derived from the same source and resolved into the same authority. To consider the commands of God as essentials, and the inventions and traditions of men superadded

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thereto as circumstantials, would be a very improper, and, indeed, a very false division of the subject. Nothing but what is prescribed by the word of God, or may be fairly deduced from it, is worthy the name even of a circumstantial in true religion. Human appointments, if not repugnant to Scripture and the light of conscience, may be submitted to for the sake of peace, or when the general purposes of edification cannot be attained without them; but they seem not to deserve a place even among the circumstantials of a religion which is of divine institution. All the laboured arguments, whether for or against the colour of a garment, the shape of a building, and a multitude of other things, equally insignificant, seem to have occasioned a needless loss of time and temper, chiefly by a mistake of the question on both sides.

2. Essentials in Christianity are those things without which no man can be a Christian in the sight of God, and by the decision of his word; and, on the other hand, those things only are essential, which whoever possesses, is, by Scripture declaration, in a state of favour with God through Christ. These might be branched out into many particulars; but they are fully and surely comprised in two—faith and holiness. These are essential to the being of a Christian; are only to be found in a Christian; are infallible tokens that the possessor is accepted in the Beloved, and whoever dies without them must assuredly perish. These are essentials, because they are absolutely necessary; for it is written, 'He that believeth not shall be damned,'* and 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord†:' and they are essential likewise, because they demonstrate an interest in the promise of everlasting life. Thus our Lord declares, 'He that heareth my words, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life:'‡ and the apostle, writing to the believing Romans, tells them, 'Now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'§ These, then, are the essentials of religion; and though they are produced by the same power of the Holy Spirit, and derived from a knowledge of the same truths, and therefore cannot be separated, they may properly be distinguished, for the conviction of those who pretend to one without the other. The most specious appearances of holiness, which are not accompanied with faith in Christ, may be safely rejected as counterfeits. On the other hand, a profession of faith which is not evidenced by the fruits of holiness, by gra-

* Mark xvi. 16. † Heb. xii. 14. ‡ John v. 24. § Rom. vi. 22.

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cious tempers, and a tenour of life becoming the Gospel, is dead, delusory, and destructive.

If the question is removed another step, and it should be asked, which, or how many, of the doctrines of Scripture are necessary to produce the faith and holiness supposed requisite? it may suffice to say, that, in the nature of things, no person can be expected to believe in Christ till convinced of his need of him, and of his ability, as a Saviour, fully to answer his expectations. And as a supreme love to God, and a hatred of all sin, are evidently included in the idea of holiness, it supposes a disposition of mind which every man's experience proves to be beyond the power of fallen nature; and therefore a competent knowledge and cordial acceptance of what the Scripture teaches, concerning the nature and desert of sin, the person and mediatory acts of Christ, the causes, ends, and effects of his mediation, together with the necessity of that change of heart which is expressed by a being born again, appear to be essentially necessary to that faith and holiness which are described in the Gospel.

3. The circumstantials of religion include all those particulars of revelation which a person, possessed of the above-mentioned essentials, may as yet be unacquainted with, or unable to judge of with certainty. A careful application to the Scripture, a diligent waiting upon God in prayer, and an improvement of the means of grace, will, by the divine blessing, which is promised to those who seek in this manner, increase our light, comprehension, and certainty, with regard to these points, which, though not essentially necessary to the being of a Christian, are exceedingly conducive to his well-being, to his growth and establishment in the truth.

This subject may be, perhaps, illustrated from the animal frame, in which what we call the vital parts may be considered as essential to life, because there can be no life without them. We may easily conceive that a man may live without an arm or leg, or several members and organs, which, though highly valuable for use and comfort, are not necessarily connected with life; but if we conceive of him as deprived of his head, heart, or lungs, we can no longer consider him as living; yet it is desirable to have a body not only animated, but organized. So likewise in religion, those who are truly partakers of it will not too curiously inquire, how much knowledge, or what degree of practice is barely consistent with a possibility of life; but they will earnestly desire to be acquainted with the whole will of God, and that every part of it may have a suitable influence upon their practice. But, in the mean time, a consolation is provided, in the promises of God made to those who have received the seeds of faith and

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true holiness, against the fears, doubts, and involuntary mistakes, which, from remaining ignorance, they are yet subject to. He will supply what is wanting, pardon what is amiss, and lead them on from strength to strength. They are to walk by the light already afforded, to wait on him for an increase, to be diffident of themselves, and gentle to others; and things which as yet they know not, God will in his due time, reveal to them. But to return from this digression.

V. Every part of St. Paul's history and writings demonstrates a disinterested spirit, and that his uncommon labours were directed to no other ends than the glory of God and the good of men. No man had, probably, so great an influence over his hearers, or could have a juster claim, from the nature and number of his services, to a suitable provision for himself; but he could say, with truth, 'We seek not yours, but you.' To cut off all occasious of misapprehension on this head, he usually submitted to work with his own hands, rather than be chargeable to his friends.* It is true, he does not propose himself to us as a pattern in this respect, for he tells us 'that the labourer is worthy of his hire,' and that 'the Lord had ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel;'† and when he saw it expedient, he did not refuse to be himself assisted by others. He showed, by accepting such assistance from some, that he understood his liberty, and did not act from a spirit of pride or singularity when he declined it; and, by his more general practice he evidenced that he was superior to all selfish and mercenary motives; and, upon the whole, he was content to appear and live as a poor man. And though he had learnt, in the school of Christ, how to abound, as well as to suffer want, the latter seems to have been more frequently his lot.‡ He saw too many false teachers, who, under the sanction of a sacred character, made merchandise of souls; and he not only severely censured them, but, by this self-denial, which they were unable to imitate, he manifested the vanity of their pretences in setting themselves forth as the apostles of Christ. This seems to have been his chief design in it, and the reason of his repeating, with so much earnestness, his determination to take nothing from the Corinthi-

*1 Cor. ix. 18. That—'I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge'—Αδαπανον θησω, that I may set it before you *gratis*, or a free Gospel. The messengers of good news are usually gratified with a reward; but the apostle, though he brought the most welcome and important tidings that ever rejoiced the hearts of men, would not encumber or disgrace the news, by receiving any thing for it. The truth is, he took as much pleasure in delivering his message, as they could in hearing it, and found his reward in his employment.

† 1 Cor. ix. 14. ‡ Phil. iv. 12.

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ans, who were too much inclined to listen to some of these teachers, to his disadvantage. But whatever parade they might make of gifts or zeal, or however they might presume to equal themselves to him in other respects, he knew they would not attempt to share with him in the glory of preaching the Gospel freely, which was diametrically inconsistent with their whole design. The circumstances with us are so far different, that, in proposing St. Paul as a pattern of disinterestedness, we do not lay a stress upon his preaching the Gospel without expense to his hearers; yet, in his noble contempt of worldly advantage, and making every thing stoop to the great ends of his mission, he stands as a precedent to all Christian ministers in succeeding times. In those passages of his epistles to Timothy and Titus, where the negative part of a minister's character (whether bishop or deacon) is given, this is constantly one branch of it, that he must not be influenced by a love of gain; and as constantly the word is compounded with the epithet *filthy*—'not given to filthy lucre;' to intimate that nothing can be more dishonest or dishonourable than to make a traffic of this service. Nor is this the judgment of Scripture only, but the general voice of mankind. Nothing is a greater bar to a minister's usefulness, or renders his person and labours more contemptible, than a known attachment to money, a griping fist, and a hard heart. They who enter into the priest's office for a piece of bread, who are less concerned for the flock than the fleece, who employ all their arts and influence to exchange a less emolument for a greater, or to superadd one to another, may have the reward they seek; but of all the methods of acquiring wealth, which do not directly expose a man to the lash of human laws, this is the most to be lamented and avoided. If the Scriptures are true; if St. Paul was a servant of Christ, and if the authority of his precepts and example is still binding, a day will come when mercenary preachers will wish they had begged their bread from door to door, or been chained to the oar of a galley for life, rather than have presumed to intrude into the church upon such base and unworthy views. It is to be feared that too many read the awful denunciations upon this head, in the prophets Jeremiah* and Ezekiel,† with indifference, as supposing they only relate to the Jews who lived at that time; but they are equally applicable to all who prostitute the word and worship of God to the purposes of ambition and avarice.

VI. From the foregoing particulars we may collect the idea of true Christian zeal, as exemplified in our apostle. Hardly any word in our language is more misunderstood or abused than

* Jer. xxiii. † Ezek. xiii. and xxxiv.

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*zeal.** It is used in the New Testament indifferently in a good or bad sense, and it is considered as a vice or virtue, according to its object and principle. It sometimes denotes envy,† indignation, or disdain, an obstinate and ignorant opposition to the truth, a misguided warmth in unnecessary things, and a contentious, disputatious temper. A zeal replete with these characters has too frequently been the bane and opprobrium of the Christian church; but it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing, and then it is sinful to be otherwise. Our passions were not given us in vain. When the judgment is well informed, and the understanding duly enlightened by the word of God, the more warmth the better; but this earnestness, in an ignorant or prejudiced person, is dangerous and hurtful to himself and others: it is like haste in a man in the dark, who knows not where he is going, nor what mischiefs he may suffer or occasion. False zeal spends its strength in defence of names and forms, the externals of religion, or the inventions of men: it enforces its edicts by compulsion and severity; it would willingly call for fire from heaven; but, unable to do this, it kindles the flame of persecution; and, if not providentially restrained, wages war with the peace, comfort, and liberty of all who disdain to wear its chains; and breathes threatening, slaughter, and destruction, with an unrelenting spirit: its mildest weapons (which it never employs alone, except where it is checked by a superior power) are calumny, contempt, and hatred; and the objects it seeks to worry are generally the quiet in the land, and those who worship God in spirit and in truth: in a word, it resembles the craft by which it works, and is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the true Christian zeal is a heavenly, gentle flame: it shines and warms, but knows not to destroy: it is the spirit of Christ, infused with a sense of his love into the heart: it is a generous philanthropy and benevolence, which, like the light of the sun, diffuses itself to every object, and longs to be the instrument of good, if possible,

* All religious parties profess a great regard to the precept, Jude iii. 'Contend earnestly for the faith.' And if noisy anger, bold assertions, harsh censures, and bitter persecuting zeal, can singly or jointly answer the apostle's design, there is hardly a party but may glory in their obedience. But if the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; if the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; if the true Christian contention can only be maintained by Scripture arguments, meekness, patience, prayer, and an exemplary conversation—if this is the true state of the case, where is the church or party (may I not say, where is the person) that has not still much to learn and to practise in this point?

† Compare Acts v. 17. Rom. xiii. 13. Rom. x. 2. Phil. iii. 6. Gal. i. 14. Acts xxi. 20. James iii. 16. in all which places the word is the same that is rendered *zeal* in 2 Cor. ix. 2. Col. iv. 13. John ii. 17.

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to the whole race of mankind. A sense of the worth of souls, the importance of unseen things, and the awful condition of unawakened sinners, makes it, indeed, earnest and importunate; but this it shows not by bitterness and constraint, but by an unwearied perseverance in attempting to overcome evil with good.* It returns blessings for curses, prayers for ill treatment, and, though often reviled and affronted, cannot be discouraged from renewed efforts to make others partakers of the happiness itself possesses. It knows how to express a becoming indignation against the errors and follies of men, but towards their persons† it is all gentleness and compassion; it weeps (and would, if possible, weep tears of blood) over those who will not be persuaded; but, while it plainly represents the consequences of their obstinacy, it trembles at‡ its own declarations, and feels for them who cannot feel for themselves: it is often grieved, but cannot be provoked. The zealous Christian is strictly observant of his own failings, candid and tender to the faults of others; he knows what allowances are due to the frailty of human nature and the temptations of the present state, and willingly makes all the allowances possible; and though he dare not call evil good, cannot but judge according to the rule of the Scripture, yet he will conceal the infirmities of men as much as he can; will not speak of them without just cause, much less will he aggravate the case, or boast himself over them. Such was the zeal of our apostle: bold and intrepid in the cause of God and truth, unwearied in service, inflexible in danger; when duty called, he was not to be restrained ei-

* See Rom. xii. 20, 21. This practice the apostle recommends by the metaphor of heaping coals of fire on the enemy's head. As metals that endure a moderate warmth, without alteration, are melted down and quite dissolved by an intense heat, so the hard heart, even of an enemy, may be sometimes softened by a series, an indefatigable heaping up of favours and obligations. This is a noble piece of chemistry, but almost as much out of repute and practice as the search after the philosopher's stone.

† When St. Paul, speaking of the Judaizing false teachers and their adherents, says, 'I would they were even cut off which trouble you,' he seems to allude to the circumcision they so strenuously enforced, Gal. v. 12. Compare Phil. iii. 2. His wish concerning these sectaries has been often perverted, to give sanction to the rage of persecutors; but he does not mean to cut them off with fire and sword, or to cut them off from fire and water, but to have them excluded from communion and converse with true believers.

‡ How awful to declare, to denounce the terrors of the Lord! Those terrors which are represented to us by fire unquenchable, with the additional idea of eternity, Mat. iii. 12. Mark ix. 43. As such descriptions shock and alarm a guilty conscience, there are two different methods by which the removal of this alarm is attempted. Some seek and find peace and security from the blood of Jesus; and some, who are not pleased with this method satisfy themselves and their friends with criticisms upon the terms, and tell us that the phrase 'for ever and ever' signifies a limited space; and 'fire that cannot be quenched,' denotes fire that goes out of itself.

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ther by the threats of enemies, the solicitations of friends, or the prospect of any hardships to which he might be exposed. He cheerfully endured hunger and thirst, watching and weariness, poverty and contempt, and counted not his life dear, so that he might fulfil the great purposes of the ministry which he had received of the Lord. But at the same time, in all his intercourse with men, he was gentle, mild, and compassionate; he studied the peace, and accommodated himself to the weakness of all about him: when he might command, he used entreaties; when he met with hard and injurious treatment, he bore it patiently, and, if opportunity offered, requited it with kindness. Thus, as he had drunk of the spirit, so he walked in the steps of his Lord and Master.

All who bear the name of ministers of Christ, would do well to examine how far their tempers and conduct are conformable to St. Paul's. Are there not too many who widely differ from him? Where he was immovable as an iron pillar, they are flexible and yielding as a reed waving in the wind, suiting their doctrines and practice to the depraved taste of the world, and prostituting their talents and calling to the unworthy pursuit of ambition and applause. On the other hand, in things less essential, or not commanded, they invade the rights of private judgment, and attempt to bind* heavy yokes and impositions upon those whom Christ has made free; and while they readily tolerate (if not countenance) scepticism and immorality, they exert all their strength and subtilty to disquiet or suppress those who differ from them in the slightest circumstance, if they profess to differ for conscience's sake. But Jesus has no such ministers: their claim is utterly vain; none but those who are ignorant of the plainest truths can allow them this character; their tempers, their behaviour, the tenour of their professed instructions, and the total want of efficacy and influence in their ministrations, plainly demonstrate that he neither sent them nor owns them.

VII. Having considered the subject-matter and the leading views of the apostle's ministry, it may not be improper to take some notice of his manner as a preacher. This he reminds the Corinthians of. They were reputed a polite and ingenious people. St. Paul was aware of their character, and expresses him-

*Matt. xxiii. 4. 'They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne,' a weight of traditions and observances, 'and lay them upon men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.' There is a double opposition in this passage—between to *be borne* and to *move*, and between the *shoulders* and a *finger*. It has been often found since, that those who are most impatient of restraint themselves, are most earnest in pressing yokes and bonds upon others.

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self as if he had been deliberating, before he saw them, in what way he should address them with the fairest probability of success. He tells them,* that he determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; including, in this one comprehensive expression, the whole scheme of Gospel doctrine; and as to the manner in which he delivered this doctrine, he says, 'My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.' We are sure that he did not renounce justness of reasoning or propriety of expression; in these respects he exceeded their most admired orators, as may appear to any who have skill and candour to compare his epistles and discourses (in the original) with the best performances of the Greek writers; but he renounced 'the enticing,' or plausible 'words of man's wisdom.' In the term 'man's wisdom,' I apprehend may be included whatever the natural faculties of man are capable of discovering or receiving, independent of the peculiar teaching of the Spirit of God, which is promised and restrained to those who, sensible of their own foolishness, are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God; and 'the enticing words' of man's wisdom, may include all those ways and arts which the wise men of the world have used, or approved, as most effectual to express, adorn, or defend their own wise sentiments and discoveries.† These, and the methods of setting them off to advantage, have been divided into many branches, and dignified with sounding names; but all the efforts of man's wisdom, considered as engaged in the subjects of religion and morals, may be summed up in three particulars. 1. A vain inquiry into things which lie wholly beyond the capacity of man in his present state, and which can only be discovered by supernatural revelation. 2. A vain attempt to account for every thing according to the light and principles of depraved reason. 3. A studious exactness in language, either an easy flow of words to please and amuse the ear, or a torrent of strong and figurative expressions to engage the passions, according as a different taste or fashion happens to prevail. It would be too dry a task to illustrate these points, by adducing specimens of each from the

* 1 Cor. ii. 1—4.

† In 1 Cor. xiv. 9. St. Paul recommends 'words easy to be understood.' His reasoning in that chapter is levelled not only against the absurdity of speaking in an unknown tongue, but against the use of any terms, or the treating upon any subjects, which are not adapted to the level of the auditory. Many discourses that are expressed in English phrases, are as useless to the bulk of the people as if they were delivered in Greek; for what have the people to do with scholastic or metaphysical niceties, or curious researches into antiquity, or elegant dissertations upon the fitness of things? They cannot understand them; and, if they could, they would find them nothing to their purpose.

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works of the ancient and modern philosophers: but if we had not other employment in hand, it would be easy to show that man's wisdom, in the first sense, is Uncertainty; in the second, Prejudice; in the third, Imposition and Artifice. It is sufficient for my present purpose, that the apostle renounced them all. Instead of vain conjectures,* he spoke from certain experience; he could say, 'I received of the Lord, that which I also delivered to you:' instead of accommodating his doctrine to the taste and judgment of his hearers, he spoke with authority in the name of God, whom he served: instead of losing time in measuring words and syllables, that he might obtain the character of a fine speaker, he spoke, from the feeling and fullness of his heart, the words of simplicity and truth. The success of his preaching did not at all depend upon the softness and harmony of his periods, and therefore he disdained an attention to those petty ornaments of speech which were quite necessary to help out the poverty of 'man's wisdom;' he sought something else, which those who preach themselves rather than Christ Jesus the Lord, have little reason to expect;† I mean, the power and demonstration of the Spirit. He knew that this alone could give him success; and ministers may learn from him, what to avoid and what to seek for, if they would be useful to their hearers. Men can but declare the truths of the Gospel; it is the Spirit of God who alone can reveal them: nothing less than a divine power can present them to the mind in their just importance, and throw light into the soul by which they may be perceived; nothing less than this power can subdue the will, and open the heart to receive the truth in the love of it: without this concurring agency, even St. Paul would have preached in vain. From what has been said, we may remark two obvious reasons, amongst others, why we have so much unsuccessful preaching in our days: either the Gospel-truths are given up, or the Gospel simplicity departed from.

* Though the apostle disclaimed the light sophistry which obtained in the schools, the tenour of his preaching was founded upon the clearest principles, and contained a chain of the justest consequences. He did not only assert, but prove and demonstrate the truth of his doctrines, by ancient prophecies, by recent facts, and by a present incontestible efficacy. 'Yet it is called the demonstration of the Spirit,' to intimate that the strongest and best adapted evidence is insufficient to the purposes of salvation, unless accompanied with a divine power.

† A man who has languages and science in his head, but does not know or relish the Gospel of Christ, is an ignorant, indeed, a stupid person, unaffected with the grandest view of wisdom, power, and goodness, that ever was, or can be displayed; and whoever truly knows and embraces this mystery of godliness, is a wise man, a person of an excellent understanding, though he may not be much acquainted with those uncertain, unsatisfying systems which men have agreed to honour with the name of knowledge. See Psalm cxi. 10.

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Where either of these is the case, the Lord refuses his power and blessing.

VIII. Another observable part of St. Paul's character, is his unaffected humility. In the midst of his eminent and extensive services, he retained a deep sense of the part he once acted against the Lord. He speaks of himself, on this account, in the most abasing language, as the chief of sinners, and strongly expresses his unworthiness of the grace and apostleship he had received, by comparing himself to an untimely birth;* and though his insight into the mysteries of the Gospel, the communion he maintained with God by faith in his Son, and the beauty of holiness which shone in his conversation, were all beyond the common measure; yet, having, in the same proportion a clearer sense of his obligations, and of the extent and purity of the divine precepts, he thought nothing of his present attainments, in comparison of those greater degrees of grace he was still pressing after.† While, in the eyes of others, he appeared not only exemplary, but unequalled, he esteemed himself less than the least of all saints;‡ and his patience and condescension towards others, and his acquiescence under all the trying dispensations of providence with which he was exercised, were a proof that this was not an affected manner of expression, but the genuine dictate of his heart. To speak of one's self in abasing terms is easy; and such language is often a thin veil, through which the motions of pride may be easily discerned; but though the language of humility may be counterfeited, its real fruits and actings are inimitable. Here again he is a pattern for Christians. An humble frame of mind is the strength and ornament of every other grace, and the proper soil wherein they grow. A proud Christian, that is, one who has a high conceit of his own abilities and attainment, is no less a contradiction, than a sober drunkard or a generous miser. All other seeming excellencies are of no real value, unless accompanied with this; and though a person should appear to have little more than a con-

*1 Cor. xv. 8. 'As one born out of due time.' The original word is Εκτρωμα, that is, *an abortion*. He speaks of himself under this despicable image, (the true sense of which is not easily perceived by an English reader,) to show the deep and humbling sense he retained of the part he once acted against the church of Christ. He considered himself as unworthy and contemptible to the last degree; as one of whom no good hope could be justly formed at that time, much less that he should be honoured with a sight of the Lord Jesus from heaven, and with a call to the apostolic office.

†Phil. iii. 13. 'Forgetting the things that are behind.' As a traveller upon urgent business posts from place to place, forgets the distance and inconveniences behind him, and has all his thoughts taken up with the place he would be at, and the remainder of the road that leads to it.

‡Eph. iii. 8.

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sciousness of his own insufficiency, and a teachable, dependent spirit, and is waiting upon the Lord, in his appointed way, for instruction and a blessing, he will infallibly thrive as a tree planted by the water side; for God, who resisteth the proud, has promised to give grace to the humble.* But, in an especial manner, humility is necessary and beautiful in a minister. The greatest abilities and most unwearied diligence will not ensure success without it; a secret (if allowed) apprehension of his own importance, will deprive him of that assistance, without which he can do nothing: 'his arm will be dried up, and his right eye will be darkened;'† for the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all human glory, and will honour none but those who abase themselves, and are willing to give all the praise to him alone. If any man had ground to set a value upon his knowledge, gifts, and services, St. Paul might justly claim the preeminence. But though he was an apostle, and an inspired writer, though he had planted churches through a considerable part of the known world, though he was received as an angel by many to whom he preached, and, by a peculiar favour, had been caught up into the third heaven; yet he was, by grace, preserved from being exalted above measure, or from assuming an undue superiority over his brethren. The authority with which he was intrusted he employed solely to their advantage, and accounted himself the least of all, and the servant of all. How very opposite has been the conduct of many since his time, who have aimed to appropriate the name of ministers of Christ exclusively to themselves!

Such was our apostle, and the same spirit (though in an inferior degree) will be found in all the faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus. They love his name; it is the pleasing theme of their ministry, and to render it glorious in the eyes of sinners is the great study of their lives. For his sake, they love all who love him, and are their willing servants to promote the comfort and edification of their souls. They love his Gospel, faithfully proclaim it without disguise or alteration, and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as they are themselves acquainted with it. They contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and are desirous to preserve and maintain the truth in its power and purity. The knowledge of their own weakness and fallibility makes them tender to the weaknesses of others; and though they dare not lay, or allow, any other foundation than that which God has laid in Zion, yet, knowing that the kingdom of God does not consist in meats and drinks, but in righteousness,

* James iv. 6. † Zech. xi. 17.

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peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, they guard against the influence of a party-spirit; and if their labours are confined to Christians of one denomination, their love and prayers are not limited within such narrow bounds, but extend to all who love and serve their Master. They have entered upon the ministry, not for low and sordid ends, for popular applause, or filthy lucre, but from a constraining sense of the love of Jesus, and a just regard to the worth and danger of immortal souls. Their zeal is conducted and modelled by the example and precepts of their Lord; their desire is not to destroy, but to save; and they wish their greatest enemies a participation in their choicest blessings. In the subject-matter and the manner of their preaching, they show that they seek not to be men-pleasers, but to commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and when they have done their utmost, and when God has blessed their labours, and given them acceptance and success beyond their hopes, they are conscious of the defects and evils attending their best endeavours, of the weak influence the truths they preach to others have upon their own hearts; that their sufficiency of every kind is of God, and not of themselves; and therefore they sit down, ashamed, as unprofitable servants, and can rejoice or glory in nothing but in Him who came into the world to save the chief of sinners.

It might be expected that a spirit and conduct thus uniformly benevolent and disinterested, and witnessed to, in a greater or less degree, by the good effect of their ministry and example amongst their hearers, would secure them the good will of mankind, and entitle them to peace, if not to respect. But, on the contrary, these are the very people who are represented as deceivers of souls, and disturbers of society; they are not permitted to live in some places, and it is owing to a concurrence of favourable circumstances if they are permitted to speak in any; the eyes of many are upon them, watching for their halting; their infirmities are aggravated, their expressions wrested, their endeavours counteracted, and their persons despised. The design of our history is to show, in the course of every period of the church, that those who have approached nearest to the character I have attempted to delineate from St. Paul, have always met with such treatment;* and from his declaration, that 'all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,† we may expect it will always be so,

* Our Lord's declaration, 'Behold I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves,' is applicable to all his servants. The sight of a lamb is sufficient to provoke the rage and appetite of a wolf. Thus the spirit of the Gospel awakens the rage and opposition of the world; they have an antipathy to it, and owe it a grudge wherever they see it.

† 2 Tim. iii. 12.

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while human nature and the state of the world remain as they are. However, it may be a consolation to those who suffer for righteousness sake, to reflect that the apostles were treated thus before them; particularly St. Paul, who, as he laboured, so he suffered more abundantly than the rest. His person was treated with contempt and despite, his character traduced, his doctrine misrepresented; and, though his natural and acquired abilities were great, and he spoke with power and the demonstration of the Spirit, yet he was esteemed the filth and off-scouring of all things, a babbler,* and a madman.†

CHAPTER III.

Of the Irregularities and Offences which appeared in the Apostolic Churches.

THERE are few things in which the various divisions of professing Christians are so generally agreed, as in speaking highly and honourably of primitive Christianity. In many persons this is no more than an ignorant admiration, not capable of distinguishing what is truly praiseworthy, but disposed to applaud every thing in the gross that has the sanction of antiquity to recommend it. The primitive Christians have been looked upon, by some, as if they were not men of the same nature and infirmities with ourselves, but nearly infallible and perfect. This is often taken for granted in general; and when particulars are insisted on, it is observable that they are seldom taken from the records of the New Testament, and the churches which flourished in the apostles' times, but rather from those who lived in and after the second century, when a considerable deviation in doctrine, spirit and

* Acts xvii. 18.

† 2 Cor. v. 13. See likewise Mark iii. 21. 'And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him; for they said, He is beside himself;' that is to say, his attention to the office he has undertaken, has transported him beyond the bounds of reason, and made him forget his station, his friends, and his safety; therefore, out of pure affection and prudence, they would have confined him: nor is it any wonder that our Lord's friends and relatives should thus think and speak of him, since we are assured that even his brethren did not believe on him; John vii. 5. And there seems to have been no possible medium. All who were conversant with him, must either receive him as the Messiah, or pity, if not despise him, as a madman. This was the mildest judgment they could form. The Pharisees, indeed, went further, and pronounced him an impostor and a devil. Such was the treatment our Lord and Master found. Let not then his disciples and servants be surprised or grieved, that they are misrepresented and misunderstood, on account of their attachment to him, but let them comfort themselves with his gracious words—John xv. 18—21.

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conduct, from those which were indeed the primitive churches, had already taken place; and there were evident appearances of that curiosity, ambition, and will-worship, which increased, by a swift progress, till at length professed Christianity degenerated into little more than an empty name.

If Christians of the early ages are supposed to have been more exemplary than in after-periods, chiefly because they lived nearer to the times of our Lord and his apostles, it will follow, of course, that the earlier the better. We may then expect to find most of the Christian spirit among those who were converted and edified by the apostles' personal ministry; and though we cannot allow the assumption, (for the power of godliness depends not upon dates, periods, or instruments, but upon the influence of the Holy Spirit,) yet we are content to join issue upon the conclusion, and are willing that all claims to a revival of religion, and a real reformation of manners, shall be admitted or rejected, as they accord or disagree with the accounts we have of the churches planted by the apostles, and during the time that these authorized ministers of Christ presided over them. We can find no other period in which we can, to so much advantage, propose the visible churches of Christ as a pattern and specimen of what his grace and Gospel may be expected to produce in the present state of human nature; for the apostles were furnished, in an extraordinary manner, with zeal, wisdom, and authority for their work; and God was remarkably present with them by the power of his Spirit. Besides, as all the information we have concerning this period is derived from the inspired writings, we have that certainty of facts to ground our observations upon, which no other history can afford.

We have a pleasing description of the first of these churches, which was formed at Jerusalem soon after our Lord's ascension. On the day of Pentecost, many who had personally consented to the death of Jesus, received power to believe in his name, and publicly joined themselves to his disciples. A sense of his love and grace to each, united the whole body so closely together, that, though they were a multitude of several thousands, it is said, they 'were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common,'* 'and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' These were happy times indeed! No interfering interests or jarring sentiments; no subtle or factious spirits; no remissness in the means of grace; no instances of a

* Acts iv. 32.

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conduct in any respect unbecoming the Gospel, were to be found among them; it seemed as if the powerful sense of divine truths which they had received had overborne, if not extirpated, every evil disposition in so large an assembly. Yet even this (the difference of numbers excepted) is no peculiar case. The like has been observable again and again, when God has been pleased to honour ministers, far inferior to the apostles, with a sudden and signal influence, in places where the power of the Gospel had been little known before. In such circumstances the truth has been often impressed and received with astonishing effects. Many who before were dead in trespasses and sins, having been, like those of old, pierced to the heart, and then filled with comfort, from a believing knowledge of him on whom their sins were laid, find themselves, as it were, in a new world; old things are past away; the objects of time and sense appear hardly worth their notice; the love of Christ constrains them, and they burn in love to all who join with them in praising their Saviour. Here, indeed, is a striking change wrought; yet the infirmities inseparable from human nature, though for the present overpowered, will, as occasions arise, discover themselves again, so far as to prove two things universally. 1. That the best of men are still liable to mistakes and weaknessess, for which they will have cause to mourn to the end of their lives. 2. That in the best times there will be some intruders, who, for a season, may make a profession, and yet, in the end, appear to have neither part nor lot in the matter. Thus it was in the church of Jerusalem. The pleasing state of things mentioned above did not continue very long: an Ananias and a Sapphira were soon found amongst them, who sought the praise of men, and made their profession a cloak for covetousness and hypocrisy:* grudgings and murmurings arose in a little time between the Jews and the Hellenists:† and it was not long before they were thrown into strong debates, and in danger of divisions, upon account of the question first started at Antioch, whether the law of Moses was still in force to believers or not.‡

In these later times, when it has been attempted to vindicate and illustrate a revival of religion, by appealing to the writings of St. Paul, and the delineation he has given us of the faith and practice of a Christian, the attempt has often excited disdain. It has been thought a sufficient answer to enumerate and exaggerate the faults, mistakes, and inconsistencies, (or what the world is pleased to account such,) that are charged upon the persons concerned in such an appeal, as necessarily proving that, where these

* Acts v. † Acts vi. ‡ Acts xv.

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blemishes are found, there can be no resemblance to the first Christians. If the frequency did not lessen the wonder, it might seem very unaccountable that any person who has read the New Testament, should venture upon this method in a Protestant country where the people have the Scripture in their hands, and are at liberty to judge for themselves. But as there are not a few, even among Protestants, who seem to expect their assertions will pass for proofs, I propose, in this chapter, to point out several things, which, though undoubtedly wrong, had a considerable prevalence among the first Christians, leaving the application to the judicious reader. I acknowledge my firm persuasion that a certain system of doctrine, revived of late years, is the doctrine of the reformation, and of the New-Testament, which, though not suited to the general and prevailing taste, is attended, more or less, with the blessing and power of God, in turning sinners from darkness to light. I confess, that both ministers and people who espouse this despised cause, have sufficient ground for humiliation. We have seen, we still see, many things amongst us which we cannot approve; we fear that too many are a real discredit to the cause they profess; and we are conscious that the best of us fall mournfully short of what might be expected from the sublime principles which, by the grace of God, we have been taught from his word. We desire to be open to conviction, not to contend for errors, or even to vindicate any thing that can be proved contrary to the Scripture; but if some things not justifiable, which we must own have accompanied what we verily believe to be a work of the Spirit of God, are (as some would represent them) sufficient to discredit this work, to impeach the truth of the doctrines or the sincerity of the instruments in the gross—then we are sure it will follow, upon the same principles, that the Jews and Heathens had just ground and warrant to reject the doctrine of the apostles, and to treat their persons with contempt.

A complete knowledge and consideration of the present state of man, in himself, and of the circumstances in which he is placed, are necessary to preserve us from being offended with the Gospel of Christ, on account of the imperfections that may be found in the conduct of those who have sincerely received it. Due allowances must be made for the remains of ignorance and prejudice, the power of habit, temper, and constitution, in different persons. The various combinations of these, and other particulars, make each individual character, though agreeing in one common nature, and influenced by the same general principles, in some respects an original. The power and subtilty of Satan, and his address in suiting his temptations to the peculiar inclinations and situation of every person, must be taken into the account;

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and likewise the immense variety of occasions arising from without, such as the provocations and arts of enemies, the influence of mistaken friends, the necessary engagements, connexions, and relations of common life, the artifices of seducers, and the scandals of false professors. These things, and others which might be named, concur to make the path of duty exceeding difficult, especially to young beginners; who, so soon as they become sincerely desirous to serve the Lord, find themselves immediately in the midst of scenes in which they can only be fitted to act their parts aright by a gradual and painful experience. They whose intentions are right, usually set out with warm hearts and sanguine expectations, little aware of the difficulties that are before them. They have, indeed, a sure rule to act by in the Scripture, and they have a sure promise, that the Spirit of God will be their guide and teacher; but at first they have but little acquaintance with the Scripture, and till they are humbled, by being left to commit many mortifying mistakes, they are too prone to lean to their own understandings. Every day brings them into some new difficulty, wherein they can get little direction from what they have passed through before; and often emergencies are so pressing as hardly to leave room for deliberation: in short, it seems to be the Lord's pleasure, not so much to preserve them from mistakes and indiscretions at first, as to take occasion to humble them upon this account, and to show them how to correct them when made. Thus they are more confirmed in a sense of their own weakness and of his goodness, and are trained up, by time, observation, and repeated trials, to a more perfect exercise of every branch of Christian wisdom. By degrees their judgments are formed to greater maturity; they are more jealous of themselves, more acquainted with Satan's devices, more capable of distinguishing the spirit and conduct of mankind, and especially more simply dependent upon God for his teaching and direction: and thus they grow into a participation of the spirit of the Gospel, and are enabled to act and speak as becomes the servants of Christ. When his Gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there always will be some who are able, by the grace of God, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to demean themselves so, that if any will speak evil of them, the shame is retorted upon themselves. But, among the numbers who are forming in the same school, there will likewise be some (for the reasons I have suggested) whose conduct will, in some respects, be liable to censure, though their hearts are sincere; and there will frequently be others who (like the hearers compared by our Lord to seed sown upon rocky ground) will thrust themselves amongst professors, be called by the same name, and ac-

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counted by the world the same people, who at length discover themselves to be mere hypocrites. These, indeed, will furnish occasion enough for exception; and they who are glad to have it so will readily suppose, or pretend, that they are all alike. It remains to show that, in this sense, there is no new thing under the sun. It was so from the beginning.

The apostle Paul bears an honourable testimony to the sincerity, zeal, and grace of the believers amongst whom he had preached, and to whom he had written. He commends their work of faith and labour of love; he styles them his joy, his glory, and his crown; and expresses his confidence that the Lord, who had begun a good work in them, would assuredly complete it. But though he knew there were many persons among them who were established in the truth, and judicious in their conduct; his admonitions, upon several occasions, show there were others whose judgments were weak, and behaviour unwarrantable.

He speaks of the Corinthians* as a people enriched in the knowledge of Christ, and honoured with an eminency of gifts. Yet he takes notice of many things blameable in them; insomuch that, if the people who now censure appearances of a religious kind, because they are not wholly free from imperfection, could have had opportunity to judge of the Christians at Corinth in the same spirit, it is probable they would have despised and condemned those whom the apostle loved, as much as they can possibly do any set of people now.

They had first received the Gospel from St. Paul, but it had been confirmed to them afterwards by other ministers. The servants of Christ all preach the same truths; but the Holy Spirit, who furnishes them all for the work he appoints them to, distributes to each one severally, according to his own will. He communicates a diversity of gifts, not all to one person, but each has a talent given him to profit withal. One is favoured with a peculiar insight into the mysteries of the Gospel, another has a power and pathos of expression, and another is happy in a facility of applying to distressed and wounded consciences. It is the duty and privilege of Christians to avail themselves of these different talents, to profit by each, to be thankful for all, and to esteem every faithful minister very highly for his works' sake. But the Corinthians were unduly influenced by personal attachments, as their several inclinations led them. They formed imprudent comparisons and preferences, were divided into parties, and drawn into contentions, upon this account; one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos, or I of Cephas :† they

* 1 Cor. i. 5.

† 1 Cor. i. 12.—iii. 4.

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thought it a mark of zeal to be strenuous for their respective favourites; but St. Paul assured them that it was a sign they were weak and low in the Christian life, and a means to keep them so. Disputes and prepossessions of this kind draw the mind away from its proper nourishment, and afford occasion for the various workings of our selfish passions. Wherever the Lord is pleased to raise up, in or near the same place, ministers who are of eminence in their different gifts, the effects of this spirit will be more or less observable; and it is eagerly observed by the world, and amplified to the utmost, as a weighty objection. The ministers are represented to be artful, designing men, who, under the sacred names of Christ and the Gospel, are aiming chiefly or solely to form a party of dependants upon themselves; and the people are accounted silly sheep, carried away captive by the influence of their popular leaders, insomuch that they cannot, or dare not, receive the doctrines they profess to love from any but their own favourites. This disposition is certainly wrong; but let it be censured with candour, not as the peculiarity of this or that party, but as a fault which human nature is always prone to in a similar circumstance. It showed a want of solid judgment in the Corinthiaus, but was no impeachment of their sincerity; much less did it prove that Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, were mercenary, ambitious men, who prostituted their talents and influence to gain disciples to themselves rather than to Christ. The same premises will admit of no stronger conclusion now than in the apostles' days.

The proper design and tendency of the religion of Jesus is, to wean the affections from the world, to mortify the dictates of self-love, and to teach us, by his example, to be gentle, forbearing, benevolent, and disinterested. This the world is aware of, and, though they declare their dislike to the principles which alone can produce such a spirit, they always expect it from the people who profess them; and, therefore, when, amongst the numbers of these, they can find a few instances of persons too much actuated by selfish, worldly, or angry tempers, it is eagerly objected, 'These are excellent people, if you would judge of them by the length and frequency of their devotions, and by what they have to say of their persuasion of God's love to them; but touch them in their property, and they show themselves as unwilling to forego, and as anxious to grasp, the good things of this world, as if they had no better claim to heaven than ourselves.' It is much to be lamented that such occasions of reproach are afforded to those who seek them. But what would they have said of the Corinthians, whom the apostle reproves in the following terms! 'Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go

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to law one with another: why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.'* And, in the preceding chapter, he speaks of an enormity among them hardly to be heard of among the Heathens; which, though the fault of one person, brought dishonour upon them all, because they had not explicitly disowned it, and proceeded against the offender. This is not to be wondered at; for we have often seen, in our own time, that though evil practices have been censured in the strongest terms of disallowance, and the offenders publicly and notoriously disclaimed, yet many will still be so destitute of candour and equity as to insist on it, 'They are all alike.'

The irregularities in the public worship at Corinth were such as, if practised amongst ourselves, would excite a greater clamour than any thing of that nature which has been hitherto complained of. It appears, that, far from conducting their assemblies with decency and order, they were sometimes in the greatest confusion. Different persons had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation, many speaking together, and sometimes in different languages; so that the apostle thought it very probable that, if an unbeliever came in amongst them, he would, of course, say they were mad.† And this want of decorum extended to their celebration of the Lord's supper, where, says the apostle, 'every one taketh before another; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.'‡ I apprehend that these instances of disorder cannot be paralleled by the most irregular procceedings in our time, amongst any people that hold the principles which I am at present engaged to vindicate.

Many of the Corinthians, as well as the Galatians, had discovered great unsteadiness towards St. Paul, and had been seduced by false teachers and pretended apostles.‖ Inexperienced minds are very liable to such deceptions: meaning well themselves, they are too apt to listen to the fair words and fine speeches of those who lie in wait to deceive. The love of Christ, and the love of holiness, are the leading properties of a gracious

* 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8. † 1 Cor. xiv. 23. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 21.

‖ Yet he says of the Galatians, that when he first went among them they received him as an angel of God; and, if possible, would have plucked out their own eyes to have given them to him, Gal. iv. 15. Great is the power of the Gospel; it subdues and possesses the heart, and conciliates a tenderness and relation between ministers and people, nearer and dearer than the ties of flesh and blood. But, alas, how great likewise is the inconstancy of mortals! The apostle experienced it to his grief; and where he had the greatest prospect, he was most disappointed. Those who once would have plucked out their own eyes for his service, afterwards accounted him their enemy for telling them the truth. We need not therefore wonder, if there are instances of this kind at present.

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heart; and such an one, till experience has made him wise, conceives a good opinion of all who profess a regard for Jesus, or for sanctification. He is not aware, at first, that there are those in the world who attempt to divide what God has joined together. When the blood and righteousness of Christ are recommended, not as the source, but as a substitute for vital, experimental religion, or when some other spirit is preached than that whose office it is to testify of Jesus; in either case the food of the soul is poisoned, and the evil begins to operate before it is perceived. Faithful ministers are accounted too low or too high, too strict or too remiss, according to the scheme newly adopted: they are first disregarded, and at length considered as enemies, because they persist in the truth, and refuse to suit themselves to the new taste of their hearers. Thus error, once admitted, makes an alarming progress, and no power but that of God can stop it. Hence proceed divisions, subdivisions, distinctions, refinements, bitterness, strife,* envyings, and by degrees enthusiasm, in the worst sense of the word; an evil to be dreaded and guarded against no less earnestly than the beginning of a fire or a pestilence. Such trying circumstances will demonstrate who are indeed upon the right foundation; for others, having once begun to depart from the truth, grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; and many who are built upon the rock, and therefore cannot be totally or finally drawn away, yet suffer unspeakable loss; the 'wood, hay and stubble,'† the unadvised additions they have admitted to the scriptural truths they once received, are burnt up in the time of temptation; they lose much of their comfort and stability, and have in a manner, all to begin again. The world, that knows not the weakness of man, or the power and devices of Satan, laughs at those things, and expects to see them issue in an universal confusion, like that of Babel. In the same light, it is most probable, the Heathens beheld and derided the primitive Christians, for they likewise had their shaking and sifting times; many amongst them, who seemed to begin in the spirit, were stopped short in their course by the arts of false teachers, to their great hindrance, and some to their final overthrow.

* That bitterness and strife were too frequent in the primitive churches, appears from James iii. 14. Gal. v. 15. and other texts. Our Lord's admonition, Matt. vii. 3—5, has always been too little regarded; and few are yet sufficiently convinced of the folly and absurdity of pointing out, and in an angry spirit condemning, the mistakes and faults of others, while we indulge greater in ourselves. Reformation (like modern charity) should begin at home.

† 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

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St. Paul addresses no one church in terms of greater tenderness and approbation than the Thessalonians. He commends their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus, and mentions them as a pattern to the other churches in Macedonia and Greece. Yet even among these he understood there were 'some who walked disorderly, and were busy-bodies, not working at all;' he strongly disapproved their conduct, declaring that 'if any would not work, neither should he eat.'* When persons are newly awakened to a concern for their souls, and deeply impressed with the importance of eternity, it is no wonder (considering the animal frame) if their attention is so engaged and engrossed, for a season, that they cannot attend to the affairs of common life with their usual alacrity and freedom.† If their concern is of a right kind, they are gradually brought to peace and hope in believing. They recover their spirits; and their civil callings being now sanctified by a desire to glorify God in them, their diligence is not less, but frequently greater than before; for now they act not to please men, or to please themselves, but what they do, they do heartily as to the Lord. However, amongst a number of people, natural temper, indiscretion, or inadvertence may cause some to deviate from the general rule; and though we cannot justify any who are remiss in the discharge of the relative duties of society, we may justify the doctrines and principles they acknowledge from the charge of leading them into this mistake, unless it can be proved that St. Paul's preaching was justly chargeable with the same fault.

But these are small things compared to what he says in another place. He complains to the Philippians in this affecting language‡—'Many walk, (not some only, but many) of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction. whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things.' St. Paul had occasion to express himself thus, and that again and again,

* 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.

† See James iv. 9. The word Κατηφεια, rendered *heaviness*, answers nearest to *dejection*, the derivation importing a downcast countenance: and it expresses that kind of sorrow which sinks the spirits, and fixes the eyes upon the earth. Something of this is usually discernible when a real conviction of sin takes place in the heart. The inspired apostle recommends this temper and demeanour, as most suitable to the case of sinners who are destitute of faith and love, and cannot therefore rejoice upon good grounds; and yet, when any person begins to be impressed in this manner, and to see the propriety of the apostle's advice, it frequently happens that all who know him, both friends and enemies, will agree to pronounce him disordered in his senses. So different, so opposite, are the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world!

‡ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

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even in the golden days of primitive Christianity.* Could their worst enemies have given them a worse character? Can even malice itself desire to fix a harsher imputation upon any denomination of people now subsisting? Yet these are the words of truth and soberness; the words of an inspired apostle; the words, not of resentment, but grief. He spoke of it weeping; he would willingly have hoped better things; but he knew what tempers and practices were inconsistent with a sincere acceptance of the Gospel; and, unless he would shut his eyes and stop his ears, he could not but be sensible that many, who were reputed Christians, dishonoured the name of Christianity, and caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. Now what is the consequence? Shall the apostle bear the blame† of the evils and abominations he lamented? for if he had not preached, these evils would not have appeared under the Christian name. Shall the wickedness of his pretended followers be charged as the necessary effect of that pure and heavenly doctrine which he had delivered? By no means. The grace of God, which he preached, taught and enabled those who received it in their hearts, 'to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world.' If inquiry was made concerning the tendency of his doctrine, he could appeal to the tempers and lives of multitudes,‡ who had been thereby delivered from the love and power of sin, and filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. But it was likewise true that they were still encumbered with a depraved nature; they were in a world full of temptations and snares; and, as their numbers were very great, some instances had occurred of persons sincerely well disposed, who had too visibly declined from the rule by which they professed and desired to walk. Against their mistakes and faults he watchfully directed his exhortations and admonitions, as occasions offered; and they were generally attended with a good effect, to convince, humble, and restore the offenders, and to increase their circumspection for the time to

* What disagreeable things the apostle was apprehensive of meeting, when he should revisit Corinth, we may learn from 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

† The apostle knew that some did or would presume to infer a liberty to sin from the doctrine which he preached; Rom. vi. 1; yet he would not suppress or disguise the truths of God to prevent such a poor disingenuous perversion. He knew likewise that no one, who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, can either form such a conclusion himself, or listen to it if proposed by others; therefore he thought it unnecessary to refute it at large. 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!' This is a sufficient answer. This absurd blasphemy exposes and confutes itself: the terms are inconsistent, impossible, and contradictory in the highest degree.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

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come.* It was true, likewise, that there were some gathered, by the preaching of the Gospel, into the number of professors, who were not effectually called and changed by the Spirit of God. These, though for a time they had a name to live, were no better than dead; and one reason why the Lord permitted the offences and divisions we have mentioned to take place, was, that, by the means of such heresies, those that were approved might be made manifest, and the chaff separated from the wheat. For, though the ignorant world would call even those persons Christians whose conduct proved them enemies to the cross of Christ, yet time, the test of truth, unanswerably evinced the difference. Thus St. John, who lived some years after the rest of the apostles, and saw many turn their backs upon the teachers and doctrines they had once owned, has observed to this purpose, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.'† In a word, there were too many pretenders; some things amiss where the heart and views were right in the main; and imperfections in the best. The scorners and cavillers, who hated the light of the Gospel, and were always in search of something to confirm their prejudices against it, met with much answerable to their wishes, even in the first and best churches; but to men of candour, who were ingenuous seekers of the truth, the spirituality, humility, and brotherly love that prevailed among the Christians, and the powerful effects of their public ordinances, demonstrated that the truth was on their side, and that God was assuredly with them.

We offer the same apology, the same train of reasoning, in behalf of what is now so generally deemed the foolishness of preaching. The doctrines we defend, which some (who cannot do it ignorantly) have the effrontery to misrepresent as novel opinions, are, we doubt not, the doctrines of Christ and his apostles, and, in substance, the doctrines taught, from the word of God, by Wickliffe, Luther, and the venerable reformers of our own church. We preach Christ crucified, Christ the end of the law for righteousness, and the power of God for sanctification, to every one that believeth. We preach salvation by grace through faith in his blood, and we are sure that they who receive this doctrine unfeignedly, will, by their lives and conversations, demonstrate it to be a doctrine according to godliness. They are not, indeed, delivered from infirmities; they are liable to mistakes and indiscretions, and see more amiss in themselves than their worst ene-

* 2 Cor. vii. 9. † 1 John ii. 19.

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mies can charge them with. But sin is their burden; they sigh to be delivered from it, and they expect a complete redemption. We cannot, indeed, say so much for all who outwardly avow a belief of this doctrine: there are pretenders, who, while they profess to believe in God, in works deny him; but it has been so from the beginning. The miscarriages of such persons are charged indiscriminately upon the societies among whom they are mixed, and upon the truths which they seem to approve; but there is a righteous God, who in due time will vindicate his own Gospel and his own people from all aspersions. St. Paul observed such things in his day, and he spoke of them likewise, but he spoke of them *weeping*. The true state of the mind may be determined from the temper with which the miscarriages of professors are observed. The profane expatiate on them with delight, the self-righteous with disdain; but they who know themselves, and love the Lord, cannot speak of them without the sincerest emotions of grief. They are concerned for the honour of the Gospel, which is defamed under this pretence; they are grieved for the unhappy and dangerous state of those by whom such offences come; and they fear for themselves, lest the enemy should gain an advantage over them likewise, for they know they have no strength nor goodness of their own. Therefore, avoiding unnecessary reflections on others, they endeavour to maintain a watchful jealousy over themselves, and to fix their hearts and hopes upon Christ Jesus their Lord; who, they are persuaded, is able to keep them from falling, to save them to the uttermost, and at length to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Heresies propagated by false Teachers in the Apostles' days.

THE parables in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew are prophetical of the reception and event of the Gospel in succeeding ages. In this view our Lord himself has explained them. Wherever it is preached, the hearers may be classed according to the distribution in the parable of the sower. Some hear without understanding or reflection. In some it excites a hasty emotion in the natural affections, and produces an observable and sudden change in their conduct, resembling the effects of a real conversion to God; but the truth not being rooted in the heart, nor the soul united to Christ by a living faith, these hopeful appear-

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ances are, sooner, or later, blasted, and come to nothing. Others are really convinced in their judgment of the truth and importance of what they hear; but their hearts cleave to the dust, and the love of this world, the care of what they have, the desire of what they have not, the calls of business, or the solicitations of pleasure choke the word which they seem to receive, so that it brings forth no fruit to perfection. A part, however, (usually the smallest part,) who are compared to the good ground, are disposed and enabled, by divine grace, to receive it thankfully, as life from the dead; and, though they meet with many difficulties, and, like the corn upon the ground, pass through a succession of trying and changing seasons, yet, having the love, promise, and power of God engaged on their behalf, in defiance of frosts, and blasts, and storms, they are brought to maturity, and when fully ripe, are safely gathered into his garner.* This is an epitome of the ecclesiastical history of every nation, and of every parish, to which this word of salvation is sent.

But the parable of the tares† teaches us further to expect, that besides the general influence which Satan, as the god of this world, will exert to blind the eyes of mankind, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine upon them,‡ he will take occasion, from the knowledge of the truth, to insinuate a variety of errors. His first attempts in this way are often so specious and unsuspected, that they are compared to a man's sowing seed by stealth, and in the night; but, as the corn grew, a large crop of tares springing up with it, demonstrated that the enemy had been there. This, in fact, has been universally the case in every country and age where the Gospel has been received; and we may remark, that the sowing the good seed was the occasion of the tares being cast into the same ground. When a people are involved in gross darkness and ignorance, sleeping in a false peace, and buried in the pleasures and pursuits of the world, they have neither leisure nor inclination to invent or attend to novelties in religion. Each one is satisfied with that form (if even the form of godliness is retained) which he has received from his parents, and neither pretends nor desires to be wiser than those who went before him. But when the truth has shone forth, and been received, and seems to bid fair for further success, Satan employs all his power and subtlety either to suppress or counterfeit it, or both. Much has been done in the former way; he has prevailed so far as to enkindle the fiercest animosities against the nearest relatives; and persuaded men that they might do acceptable service to God by punishing his faithful servants with torture, fire,

* Matt. iii. 12. † Matt. xiii. 24—30. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

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and sword.* And no less industrious and successful has he been in practising upon the passions and prejudices of mankind to admit and propagate, instead of the Gospel of Christ, and under that name, an endless diversity of opinions, utterly incompatible with it. Of these, some are ingenious and artful, adapted to gratify the pride of those who are wise in their own conceits; others more gross and extravagant, suited to inflame the imaginations, or to gratify the appetites of such persons as have not a turn for speculation and refinement.

As these appearances have always accompanied the Gospel, so they have always been a stumbling-block and offence to the world, and have furnished those who hated the light with a pretext for rejecting it; and the doctrines of truth have been charged as the source and cause of those errors which have only sprung from their abuse and perversion. When popery, for a series of ages, detained mankind in darkness and bondage, and deprived them of the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the tide of error ran uniformly in one great channel; when dead works were substituted in the place of living faith; and the worship and trust, which is due only to Jesus the great Mediator, was blasphemously directed to subordinate intercessors, to angels, and to saints, whether real or pretended; when forgiveness of sin was expected, not by the blood of Christ but by penances, pilgrimages, masses, and human absolutions; by the repetition of many prayers, or the payment of sums of money: while things continued thus, the world was generally in that state of stupidity and blind security, which is miscalled religious peace and uniformity; and the controversies of the times were chiefly confined to those points which immediately affected the power, wealth, or pre-eminence of the several religious orders by whom the people were implicitly led. Some differences of opinion were indeed known; but the charge of heresy and dangerous innovations was seldom so much as pretended against any, but the few who refused to wear the mark of the beast upon their right hands and foreheads; and who, by the mercy of God, retained and professed the main truths of Christianity in some degree of power and purity. But when it pleased God to revive the knowledge of the Gospel by the ministry of Luther and his associates, and many were turned from darkness to light, the enemy of mankind presently changed his methods, and by his influence, the sowing of the good seed was followed by tares in abundance. In the course of a few years the glory of the Reformation was darkened, and its progress obstructed, by the enthusiasm and infatuation of men, who, under a pretence of im-

* John xvi. 2.

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proving upon Luther's plan, propagated the wildest, most extravagant, and blasphemous opinions; and perpetrated, under the mask of religion, such acts of cruelty, villany, and licentiousness, as have been seldom heard of in the world. The Papists beheld these excesses with pleasure. Many of them could not but know that Luther and the heads of the Reformation did all that could be expected from them, to show the folly and iniquity of such proceedings; but, against the light of truth and fact, they laboured to persuade the world that these were the necessary consequences of Luther's doctrine, and that no better issue could be justly hoped for when men presumed to depart from the authorized standards of popes and councils, and to read and examine the Scripture for themselves.

This religious madness was however, of no long duration. The people who held tenets inconsistent with the peace of society, were deservedly treated as rebels and incendiaries by the governing powers; the ring-leaders were punished, and the multitudes dispersed; their most obnoxious errors were gradually abandoned, and are now in a manner forgot. After the peace of Passau, the Reformation acquired an establishment in Germany and other places; and since that time, error has assumed a milder form, and has been supported by softer methods and more respectable names.

In our own country the same spirit of enthusiasm and disorder has appeared at different times, (though it has been restrained, by the providence of God, from proceeding to the same extremities,) and has been most notorious when, or soon after, the power of Gospel truth has been most eminently revived; for, as I have already observed, when religion is upon the decline, and only so much of a profession retained as is consistent with the love of the present world, and a conformity to the maxims and practices of the many, we seldom hear of any errors prevailing, but such as will find a favourable toleration, and may be avowed without exciting very strong and general expressions of contempt and ill-will against those who maintain them. But whenever real religion, as a life of faith in the Son of God, is set forth upon the principles of Scripture, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit witnesses are raised up, who, by their conduct, demonstrate that they are crucified with Christ, to the law, to sin, and to the world, then is the time for Satan to discredit this work, by imposing a variety of false views and appearances upon the minds of the ignorant and unwary; and he is seldom at a loss for fit instruments to promote his designs. Since the late revival of the Reformation doctrines amongst us, we have, perhaps, fewer things of this kind to apologize for than have been observable on any simi-

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lar occasion; and the best apology we can offer for what has been really blameable, is, to show that it was even thus in the apostle's days; and that, if any arguments taken from these blemishes are conclusive against what some choose to call the novel doctrines now, they would with equal reason, conclude against the validity of the New Testament.

And, not to confine myself to such things as the world is most prone to except against, I shall endeavour to show that the seeds of all errors and heresies, the fashionable, as well as those which are more generally despised, were sown in the first age, and appeared so early as to give occasion for the apostles' censures against them. I do not mean by this to parallel every name and every singularity that a subtle head or a warm imagination may have started; but to assign, in general, the principles to which all these delusions may be reduced, the sources to which these inebriating and dangerous streams may be traced: for, indeed, the operations of the human mind seem to be much more simple and limited than we are ordinarily aware. As there can be no new truths, though every truth appears new to us which we have not known before, so it is probable that there can be now no new errors; at least it is certain that a competent knowledge of antiquity, or even a careful perusal of the apostle's writings, will furnish sufficient evidence, that some modern authors and teachers are by no means the inventors of the ingenious schemes they have presented to the public. Truth, like the sun, maintains a constant course; every thing would stagnate and die if we were deprived of it for a single day. But errors are like comets, which, though too eccentric to be subject exactly to our computations, yet have their periods of approach and recess; and some of them have appeared and been admired, have been withdrawn and forgot, over and over again.

Error in the simplest form, is a misapprehension of the truth. Some part of the Gospel must be known before any erroneous conceptions of it can take place. Thus we read,* that Simon Magus was struck with Philip's preaching, and the effects which attended it. He was so far impressed, that, it is said, he believed, that is, he made a profession of faith; he was convinced there was something extraordinary in the doctrine, but he understood it not; and the event showed he had no part nor lot in the matter. He is thought by the ancients to have been the founder of that capital sect which is known in general by the name of the Gnostics, and which, like a gangrene, spread far and wide in various branches and subdivisions, each successive head refining

* Acts viii. 9—22.

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upon the system of the preceding. In Sir Peter King's History of the Apostle's Creed, and Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, the English reader may see the substance of the figments which these unhappy men, wise in their own conceit, vented under the name of the Christian religion.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ, and of him crucified, which St. Paul preached, and in which he gloried, is the pillar and ground of truth, the rock upon which the church is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.* Mistakes in this point are fundamental, dangerous, and, if persisted in, destructive; for, as such a knowledge of God as is connected with his favour and communion is eternal life, so none can come to the Father but by the Son,† nor can any know him but those to whom the Son will reveal him.‡ On this account Satan's great endeavour (and on his success herein the strength of his kingdom depends) is to darken and pervert the minds of men, lest they should acknowledge and understand what the Scripture declares of his person, characters, and offices, as well knowing, that if these are set aside, whatever else is left of religion will be utterly unavailing. Jesus Christ is revealed in the Scripture, and was preached by his first disciples, as God manifest in the flesh, a divine person in the human nature; who, by submitting to ignominy, pain, and death, made a full and proper atonement for sin, and wrought out an everlasting righteousness in favour of all who should believe in his name; and he is set forth in that nature, in which he suffered, as the object of our supreme love, trust, and adoration. Other important doctrines, largely insisted on in the word of God, such as the demerit of sin, the obnoxiousness of sinners to punishment, and the misery and incapacity of man in his fallen state, are closely connected with this, and cannot be satisfactorily explained without it. The necessary method of our recovery exhibits the most striking view of the ruin in which sin has involved us; and is the only adequate standard whereby to estimate the unspeakable love of God manifested in our redemption. On the other hand, a knowledge of the true state of mankind, in consequence of the fall, is necessary to obviate the prejudices of our minds against a procedure which, though in itself the triumph of divine wisdom, is, in many respects, contradictory to our natural (and therefore false) notions of the fitness of things. St. Paul declares,‖ 'that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he discern them;' and in another place,§ 'that no man can say,' that is, sincerely,

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Matt. xvi. 18.
† John xvii. 3—xiv. 6. ‡ Matt. xi. 27. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 14. § 1 Cor. xii. 3.

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and upon solid conviction, 'that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' To worship him who had been hanged upon a cross, and to expect eternal happiness from his death, was to the Jews a stumbling-block; it offended their notions of the unity of the Godhead, and opposed their high esteem of their own righteousness; and to the Greeks or Heathens it appeared the greatest folly and absurdity imaginable. For these reasons the Gospel was rejected by multitudes as soon as proposed, and those who preached it were accounted babblers and madmen; not because they were at a loss for propriety of expression, or discovered any thing ridiculous in their conduct, but because they enforced tenets which were adjudged inconsistent with the common sense of mankind.

But, notwithstanding these prejudices, the energy of their preaching, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied, made an impression upon many persons, so far as to induce them to profess the name of Jesus, though they were not spiritually enlightened into the mysteries of his religion, nor their hearts thoroughly subdued to the obedience of the faith. There are other points, within the compass of the Gospel ministry, more adapted to affect the minds of men in their natural state. Few are so hardened but they have a conscience of sin, some fears with respect to its consequences, and a pre-intimation of immortality. Such are capable of being greatly affected and moved by a pathetic declaration of the terrors of the Lord, the solemnities of a future judgment, the joys of heaven, or the torments of hell. We cannot doubt that these topics, when insisted on with that strength of argument and warmth of spirit of which the apostles were capable, would engage the attention of many who were not partakers of that divine light by which alone the whole scheme of truth, in its harmony and beauty, can be perceived. The seed sown upon the rock sprang up immediately; the quickness of its growth, and the suddenness of its decay proceeding from the same cause, a want of depth in the soil. Not a few of these hasty believers presently renounced the faith altogether; and others, who went not so far as to disown the name, endeavoured to accommodate the doctrine to their prepossessions, and to explain or reject what they could not understand in such a manner as to form a system upon the whole agreeable to their own wills. Men of corrupt and prejudiced minds thus tampered with the truth; and their inventions, when made known, were adopted by others of the same cast of thought. As they were differently inclined, they directed their inquiries to different points, and each found partisans and adherents in their respective ways. Thus errors, and, in consequence, sects and divisions,

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were multiplied; for when men depart from the unerring guidance of God's word, there is no end of their imaginations; one singularity produces another, and every new leader is stimulated to carry his discoveries further than those who have gone before him. Further, as human nature is universally the same, we may judge, from what we have seen, that there always have been persons inclined to join in a religious profession, from the unworthy motives of worldly interest, and a desire to stand fair with their fellow creatures. Temptations to this were not so strong, indeed, at first, nor so general as they have often been since; yet the force of friendship, relation, (and when Christianity had been of some years' standing,) education, custom, and human authority, is very considerable. Nor is even persecution a sufficient bar against hypocrites and intruders. They who suffer for the Gospel, though despised by the world, are highly esteemed and considered by their own side: it procures them an attention which they would not have otherwise obtained: it may give them an importance in their own eyes, furnish them with something to talk of, and make them talked of by others. There are people who, for the sake of these advantages, will, for a season, venture upon many hardships; though, when the trial comes very close, they will not endure to the end. In a word, there is no reason to doubt but that amongst the numbers who professed the Gospel at first, there would be found the same variety of tempers, circumstances, views, and motives, as have ordinarily appeared amongst a great number of people, suddenly formed in any other period of time; and the apostles' writings prove that it was really so. From these general principles we may easily account for the early introduction and increase of errors and heresies; and that they should be in a manner the same as have sprung up with, or followed, succeeding revivals of the truth. Nor is it just cause of surprise, if sincere Christians have been, in some instances, entangled in the prevailing errors of the times. Designing no harm themselves, they suspect none; and are therefore liable to be imposed on by those who lie in wait to deceive.*

When Christianity first appeared, the Heathen wisdom, known by the name of philosophy, was in the highest repute. It had two principal branches, the Grecian and the Eastern. The former admitted (at least did not condemn) a multiplicity and subordination of deities; amongst whom, as agents and mediators between their supreme Jupiter and mortals, the care and concerns of mankind were subdivided; to each of which homage and sacrifices were due. Their mythology, or the pretended history of

* Ephes. iv. 14.

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their divinities, was puerile and absurd; and many of their religious rites inconsistent with the practice of public decorum and good morals. Some of the philosophers endeavoured to guard against the worst abuses, and to form a system of religion and morality, in which they seem to have proceeded as far as could be expected from men who were totally ignorant of the true God, and of their own state. Some truths they were acquainted with; truths in theory, but utterly impracticable upon any principles but those of revelation. Amongst a vast number of opinions concerning the chief good of man, a few held, that man's honour and happiness must consist in conformity to and communion with God; but how to attain these desirable ends, they were entirely ignorant.

The Eastern philosophy was solemn and mysterious; not less fabulous than the other, but the fables were of a graver cast. It seemed to mourn under the sense of moral evil, and laboured in vain to account for its entrance. Its precepts were gloomy and severe, and a perfect course of bodily mortification was recommended, as the great expedient to purify the soul from all its defilements, and to re-unite it, by degrees, to its great Author.

St. Paul, in several passages,* cautions the Christians against corrupting the simplicity of their faith, by admitting the reasonings and inventions of vain men. In some places† he seems to speak more directly of the Gnostics, whose heresies were little more than the fables of the Eastern philosophy in a new dress, with an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as an extraordinary person, yet so as utterly to exclude and deny all the important truths revealed in Scripture concerning him. They dignified their scheme with the name of Gnosis, or science; but it was falsely so called, and stood in direct opposition to the Gospel. On other occasions‡ he appears to have had the Grecian philosophy chiefly in view. But, notwithstanding his admonitions, it was not long before the errors of philosophy had an ill influence upon the professors of the Christian faith; and even several of the fathers darkened the glory of the truth, by endeavouring to accommodate it to the taste and genius of that Heathen wisdom which they had before admired, and still thought might be useful to embellish and recommend the Gospel.

But, to confine myself to the apostles' times, it is plain, from the epistles of St. Paul, John, Jude, and Peter,§ that many false prophets and teachers had, in their days, crept in, who propagated damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them,

* Coloss. ii. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 20. † 1 Tim. i. 4. Tit. iii. 9. ‡ Rom. i. 21—23. 1 Cor. i. 20—23. § Titus i. 10. 1 John iv. 1. 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. Jude 4.

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turning the grace of God into licentiousness, speaking great swelling words of vanity, boasting themselves of freedom while they were in bondage to their own lusts. And, in the epistle to the church of Ephesus,* our Lord himself mentions a sect who bore the name of Nicolaitans, and expresses his disapprobation of them in those awful terms, 'Whom I also hate.' The peculiar tenets of the people condemned in these passages of Scripture are not expressly mentioned: but from these sources were most probably, derived the sects which, in the second century, were known by the names of their several leaders, Cerinthus, Saturninus, Cerdo, Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, and others; who all, building upon the common foundation of the Eastern philosophy, or Gnosis, superadded their own peculiarities, and were differently, though equally, remote from the truth. The one thing in which they all agreed was in perverting and opposing the Scripture-doctrine concerning the person of Christ. On this point their opinions were as discordant as absurd. Some denied that Christ was come in the flesh; they pretended that Christ was sent from heaven by the Supreme God, and united himself to Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism; and that, when the Jews apprehended the man Jesus, and nailed him to the cross, Christ returned to heaven, and left him to suffer by himself. Others ascribed a heavenly derivation to his body, affirming that it passed through the Virgin Mary without any participation of her substance; while others asserted that he had no substantial flesh, but that his body was a mere phantom, or apparition, which was neither really born, nor did nor could truly suffer. Again, there were others who held the reality of his human nature, yet maintained that Christ did not suffer at all; but that Simon of Cyrene (the bearer of his cross) being taken by the Jews for him, was crucified in his stead, while he stood by and laughed at their mistake. A brief recital of these extravagances is sufficient for my present purpose. For a more particular account I refer the reader to Sir Peter King's History of the Creed already mentioned. Many passages in the apostles' writings are directed against these dangerous errors; for they strike at the root of the faith and hope of the Gospel, and are subversive of the whole tenour both of the Old and New Testament. It was believed by the ancients, that St. John wrote his Gospel with some view to these heresies; and it is certain that in his first Epistle, where (putting the disciples upon their guard against the many false prophets who were gone out into the world) he observes, that the common point, in which all their divers opinions agreed, was a denial that

* Rev. ii. 6.

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Jesus Christ was come in the flesh;* he reminds them that, as they had heard antichrist must come, even so now there were many antichrists; and that the name was applicable to all who denied that Jesus is the Christ. He admits that these false teachers went out from amongst themselves, that is, they had borne the Christian name; but he refers to the doctrines they taught, as a sufficient proof that they had never been of the number of true Christians: 'for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us.'† If opinions, equally wild and extravagant, were at this time maintained and propagated by persons who, for a season, had been warm for truth and reformation, we are not afraid that they would prejudice our cause with any who will allow due weight to the reasoning of St. John; for if they had been really of us once, they would have still continued with us.

But the truth is, the teachers in our time whose leading tenets most nearly symbolize with these ancient heresies, are not charged, or even suspected, of having had any attachment to the doctrines which I am concerned to vindicate; nor is an apology expected from them, for they give but little offence. Since the fabulous disguise under which the Gnostics of old veiled their opinions has been laid aside, their opposition to the deity and atonement of Christ has been adopted by so many who are applauded for ingenuity, fine reasoning, and great learning, that it bids fair to be the fashionable divinity of the age; and though the sufferings of Jesus are not denied, yet their proper causes and ends are openly exploded, and the attempt has often proved an easy path to acceptance, wealth, and dignity.

The attachment of the Jewish converts to the law of Moses was another source of error, which occasioned daily disputes in the churches, and gave rise, in the issue, to dangerous heresies, subversive of the true faith. Even those of them who had sincerely received the Gospel, could not easily be persuaded that a law, given to Moses by God himself, with so much solemnity, from mount Sinai, was to be entirely abrogated, and that their obligation to it was *ipso facto*, vacated the moment they believed on Jesus; who, by his obedience unto death, had accomplished all its types and ceremonies, and wrought out for his people an everlasting righteousness commensurate to its utmost requirements. The apostles, who, after the pattern of their Lord, were gentle and tender to the weak of the flock, bore with their infirmities,‡ and allowed them to retain a distinction of meats and days, and other observances, provided they did not consider

* 1 John ii, 22. iv. 3. † 1 John ii. 19. ‡ Rom. xiv. 2—6

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these things in such a point of view as to interfere with God's appointed method of justification by faith in his Son. But the matter was carried much further; for no sooner was there a church formed at Antioch, than they were troubled with perverse teachers, who told them 'that, except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved.'* The Galatians were greatly hurt by teachers of this sort;† and, as the Jews were dispersed through all the provinces, the peace of the church was more or less affected by their attempts to enforce the observance of the law, in almost every place, till after the Epistle to the Hebrews was received, and obedience to the Levitical law rendered impracticable by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.‡ From that period, it is probable, the distinction of Jew and Gentile believers ceased, and both parties were firmly incorporated into one body; but a great number of the zealots for the law separated themselves, and were known in the following age by the name of Ebionites, adopting for their rule a mixture of law and Gospel, so very different from the Gospel St. Paul preached, that they openly expressed an abhorrence both of his person and writings.

We have an account likewise of some pretended teachers, who opposed the important doctrine of the Resurrection. Some expressly maintained that there was no resurrection;§ whom St. Paul confutes at large in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Others affirmed the resurrection is passed already.‖ Perhaps they pretended that a moral change was designed by the metaphorical expression of a resurrection; the philosophers had used the word in this sense; and this would be sufficient to gain it admittance with some, who would willingly reconcile their profession to the wisdom of the world. In either way, the very foundations of hope were removed. If this point is denied, the whole system of Christian doctrine falls to the ground, and that dreadful train of consequences must be admitted, which the apostle enumerates:¶ 'If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith also vain, ye are yet in your sins; then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' Since the fertile *resurrection* of ancient mistakes, which is the sin and scandal of the present age, we have been gravely told, that the word signifies no more than the soul's awaking from the long sleep into which they suppose the period we call Death will plunge it; and that the body has no share in the revival, but dies without hope. But we may

* Acts xv. 1. † Gal. v. 4. ‡ Col. ii. 16. Tit. i. 10. Phil. iii. 2. 1 Tim. i. 7.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 12. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 18. ¶ 1 Cor. xv. 14—18.

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thank God for the Scripture, which brings comfort where philosophy gives up the cause as desperate. Faith in Christ is so closely connected with the doctrine of a resurrection, that it is common with those who oppose the former, to use all their address to explain the latter quite away; and whether they say it is past already, or it will never come, their motives, their design, and their manner of reasoning, are the same.

That there were persons who abused the doctrines of grace, as an encouragement to continue in the practice of sin, may be inferred from the Epistle of St. James, and several passages of the other apostles. Such, in our modern phrase, are styled Antinomians; a name, it must be confessed, of very indeterminate application; it is an epithet which many would fix indiscriminately upon all who preach a free salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus. 'If it is all of grace, and we can do nothing of ourselves, if it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; then we may live as we please, endeavours are useless, and obedience unnecessary.'* These are the inferences which the unenlightened heart charges as unavoidable consequences from the Gospel doctrine; and from hence we obtain a corroborating proof, that we do not mistake St. Paul's sense, or preach a Gospel different from his, because he foresaw that the same objections would seem to lie against† himself; and he guards and protests against such a perversion.‡ 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!' It seems to have been upon this account that he was slandered, and by some affirmed to have taught, 'Let us do evil, that good may come,'§—that is, in modern language, (and such things are not spoken in corners amongst us,) 'If any man would be a proper subject of what they call Grace, let him become still more vile, and plunge into the most atrocious wickedness, for the greater the sinner the better qualified for mercy.' We are content to be reproached (as St. Paul was in his time) for the truth's sake; and we would be chiefly concerned for the unhappy scoffers, who, unless God is pleased to give them repentance unto life, will one day wish they had been idiots or lunatics, rather than have vented their malicious wit against the grace and Gospel of the Lord Christ. But it must be allowed we have seen Antinomians in the worst sense of the word, men who have pleaded for sin, and, while they have laid claim to faith, have renounced and blasphemed that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. We cannot wonder that even candid and well-meaning persons have been

*Rom. xi. 6. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Rom. ix. 16. †Rom. iii. 7. ix. 19. ‡Rom. vi. 1. §Rom. iii. 8.

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greatly prejudiced, and discouraged in their inquiries after truth, by the presumption and wickedness of such pretended Christians. But no period of the church, in which the Gospel doctrine was known and preached, has been free from offences of this sort. It was so in the apostles' days. 'There were then many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, who subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not;* who professed that they knew God, but in works denied him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate;† 'who pretended to faith, but were destitute of those fruits which true faith always produces.'‡ These are described 'as clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever:'§ 'Sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and beguiling unstable souls.'‖ In opposition to such deceivers it is written, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.'¶ 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;** for 'every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.'†† 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'‡‡

St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians concerning the 'man of sin,'§§ who was to be fully revealed in the following ages, reminds them, that the mystery of iniquity, though at that time restrained from a full manifestation, did already work; teaching us, that the seeds of that grand apostacy, which at length overspread the whole professing church, were sown, and springing up, at the time of his writing. And he mentions several particulars in his Epistle to the Colossians,‖‖ such as a voluntary or self-devised humility, in worshipping angels as mediators or intercessors, a dogmatic inhibition of things which God had left free, and a specious scheme of will-worship and mortification, which, under pretence of self-denial, did really gratify pride, vanity, and self-righteousness. The progress of our history will show what a harvest of dreadful and wide-spreading evils were produced from these principles, until at length the Gospel of Christ was wholly obscured, and the lives and consciences of men were given up to the power of antichrist, who, as god, insolently sat down in the

* Tit. i. 10, 11. † Tit. i. 16. ‡ James ii. 14. § Jude 12, 13. ‖ 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14. ¶ 1 John i. 6. ** 1 John ii. 4. †† 1 John iii. 3. ‡‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19. §§ 2 Thess. ii. 3—10. ‖‖ Col. ii. 18—23.

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temple of God, and exalted himself above all laws, human and divine. It is sufficient to my purpose, at present, to take notice, that the beginnings of that spiritual infatuation, which so long detained the world in chains, and darkness, and slavery, under the tyranny of the church of Rome, were observable in St. Paul's time, and therefore deserve a place in the list of those pestilent heresies by which the enemy of souls attempted to defile the faith, and disturb the peace, of the primitive church.

Many other things are alluded to, which, for want of authentic records of the first century, we cannot with certainty explain. Besides the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, already mentioned, we read of the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but of the synagogue of Satan,* of them who held the doctrine of Balaam and of the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess.† These were certainly heretics, for our Lord severely rebukes the churches for not opposing them to the utmost; and, as he gives them different names, they probably differed from each other, though their ultimate tendency was the same, to pervert the faith of the hearers, and to introduce licentiousness of practice. The Gospel-truth is a doctrine according to godliness, and has a sanctifying influence; for the grace of God teaches all who are partakers of it, to forsake all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.‡ But errors and heresies, in whatever degree they prevail, have a poisonous effect upon those who admit them. Some are calculated to set aside the whole frame of obedience which we owe to our God and Saviour, and the most refined and plausible will deliver the soul into the power of some easy, besetting, and beloved sin, and furnish arms and arguments to maintain it. And this explains what would otherwise seem a very strange phenomenon. When the truth is proposed with the greatest clearness, and the greatest advantages, its votaries, at all times, and in all places, have been but few; but whoever will stand up on the side of error, however wild and absurd his opinions and conduct may be, will hardly fail of obtaining adherents. It is because error will tolerate those lusts and follies which truth will not endure; and, in the present state of human depravity, more people will be found willing to give up their understandings, than to part with their sins.

We may likewise collect from several texts in the Epistles, that there were those of old who denied what the Scripture teaches concerning the depravity of human nature, the real guilt of sin,§

* Rev. iii. 9. † Rev. ii. 14. 20. ‡ Tit. ii. 11, 12. § 1 John i. 8. 10.

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the influences of the Holy Spirit,* and the terrors of a future judgment:† though we cannot be sure that these doctrines were opposed so openly and so strenuously as they are in our own days. But I have enumerated enough to answer my purpose, by way of apology for the evangelical doctrine, the modern opposers of the last mentioned points not being under any suspicion or charge of what is called enthusiasm; and all who are despised or persecuted for resting the hope of their salvation solely upon the mediation of Jesus and his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, are known to acknowledge them as essential truths; indeed they stand inseparably connected with what they believe of his person, offices, power, and grace. A conscience impressed with the majesty, holiness, and justice of the great God, and that trembles at the denunciations of his law against every transgression, dares not hope for peace without the discovery of an adequate atonement for sin, nor venture its eternal concerns upon the interposition of a creature. To such a one, all that is revealed of the love and sufferings of Jesus, would afford no solid ground of consolation, if the infinite dignity of his divine nature, and his voluntary substitution in the place and on the behalf of sinners, were not revealed with equal clearness; and a conviction of that total insufficiency for every good work,‡ and the prevalence of indwelling sin,‖ which the Scripture so expressly declares to be the condition of every child of Adam, would plunge an awakened mind into hopeless despair, if it was not relieved by the gracious promise of the infallible Spirit,§ whose office is to teach, guide, comfort, and seal the children of God unto the day of complete redemption;¶ but having such a great high priest, who, by his own blood, has entered into the holy place, to appear in the presence of God for us;** and having, in the promise of the Holy Spirit,†† a source of succour and comfort answerable to all our ignorance, weakness, necessities, and temptations, we are enabled, in the midst of fightings and fears,‡‡ to maintain an humble confidence that we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming, but have boldness in the day of judgment, the great and terrible day of the Lord.‖‖ On the other hand, it is no wonder that those who do not acknowledge the deity of the Saviour, (not finding any other basis whereon to rest the validity of an atonement for sin) should embrace every shadow of an argument against its necessity, and be willing to think as highly as possible

*Jude 19. †2 Pet. iii. 9. ‡2 Cor. iii. 5. ‖Rom. vii. 18—24. §John xiv. 26—xvi. 7. 13. ¶Ephes. iv. 30. **Heb. viii. 1—ix. 24—x. 19. ††Rom. viii. 16, 26, 27. ‡‡2 Cor. vii. 5. ‖‖1 John ii. 28—iv. 17.

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of their own righteousness and abilities; or, that being thus persuaded that they can please God, without the influence of his Spirit themselves, they should treat all claims to this assistance in others as enthusiasm and folly. Nor can we be surprised that many who reject the Scripture testimony concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, should use all their address to prove that the soul sinks into sleep and inactivity at death, that the resurrection of the flesh is improbable, and that it is injurious to the goodness of God, to suppose he will inflict eternal punishment for sins committed within the compass of a short life. Such reasonings may be expected from men who presume upon the sufficiency of their own wisdom; who neither expect nor desire divine teaching, and who find a little relief in these sentiments against the fears and forebodings which will sometimes force themselves upon their minds.

It appears, however, from the indisputable evidence of the New Testament, that, in the first age of the church, the enemy sowed the tares of error and heresy in great abundance, and that the figments published in that period, by men who professed some regard to the name of Christ, have not been surpassed, either as to absurdity or wickedness, by any attempts of the same kind, in any age or country since. It is true, the vigilance and authority of the apostles restrained these excesses from rising to that height to which they afterwards attained. But if the people who now object to the variety of names, sects, and sentiments, which have gradually prevailed amongst us within these thirty years past, had lived in the primitive church, they would have had, at least, equal cause for making the like objections. If, upon these accounts, they now think themselves at liberty to reject all parties alike, without examination, as empty pretenders to the truth, purity, and power of religion; there is little doubt but they would have done the same then. The apostles were personally present with the first churches; their writings were appointed to be the rule of succeeding times, and, through the mercy of God, are in our hands. Whoever is sincerely desirous to know the will of God, by attending to these lively oracles, will be enabled to discern the path of truth and peace, through the midst of that maze of opinions wherein so many are bewildered and lost; but whoever is too wise, or too indolent, to search the Scripture humbly and diligently for himself, would have paid as little regard to the authority of the apostles if he could have conversed with them; nay, the advantage is on our side; for as the Scriptures are held in professed veneration, we run no immediate risk of character or interest by consulting them; or they may be perused in retirement, unobserved by our nearest friends; whereas the apostles, though

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highly spoken of amongst us, were accounted, while they lived, the filth and offscouring of all things; they were despised for their poverty and the meanness of their appearance, and detested as bigots and enthusiasts; so that it required some degree of faith and grace not to be ashamed of them.

Let not the reader be offended, if I close this book, as I did the former, with entreating him to reflect on the importance of having right views of the Gospel of Christ, and of the spirit of Christianity. These are topics of universal concern. A believer in Jesus, however obscure, unnoticed, or oppressed in the present life, is happy; he is a child of God, the charge of angels, an heir of glory;* he has meat to eat that the world knows not of; and from the knowledge of his union and relation to his Redeemer, he derives a peace which passes understanding,† and a power suited to every service and circumstance of life.‡ Though weak in himself, he is strong in grace that is in Christ Jesus the Lord,§ upon whom he relies, as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and expects from him, in due time, a complete redemption from every evil.‖ His faith is not merely speculative, like the cold assent we give to a mathematical truth, nor is it the blind impulse of a warm imagination; but it is the effect of an apprehension of the wisdom, power, and love displayed in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; it is a constraining principle, that works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world; it gives the foretaste and evidence of things invisible to mortal eyes, and, transforming the soul into the resemblance of what it beholds, fills the heart with benevolence, gentleness, and patience, and directs every action to the sublimest ends, the glory of God, and the good of mankind.¶

But whatever is styled religion that is not thus pure, thus peaceable, thus operative, or, at least, that does not lead the soul to desire the graces of the Spirit, and to seek them in God's appointed way, by faith in his Son, is unworthy the name. If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his;** whatever else you may have, you have no interest in the promised blessings of the Gospel; whatever else you can do, you cannot please God.†† If you do not count all things loss, and of no value, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord,‡‡ you certainly do not understand the word *Gospel* in St. Paul's sense; if you did, you would be of his mind. And are you not in danger of incurring that anathema, which, under the influence

* Rom. viii. 14. 17. † Phil. iv. 7. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9. § 2 Tim. ii. 1. ‖ 1 Cor. i. 30. ¶ Gal v. 6. Acts xv. 9. 1 John v. 4. Heb. xi. 1. 2 Cor. iii. 18. ** Rom. viii. 9. †† Heb. xi. 6. ‡‡ Phil. iii. 8.

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of the Spirit of God, he denounces against all who love not the Lord Jesus?* Search the Scriptures, if you really think that in them you have eternal life.† If, indeed, you could prove them to be cunningly devised fables,‡ you might neglect them without danger; but if the Scriptures are true, there is a day coming when God shall judge the world.† I need not appeal to Scripture to convince you that, whatever your situation in life is, you must leave it, and experience a moment when the pleasures or honours of this world will afford you no comfort; but, if the Scriptures are true, you must then appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; you must stand either at the right hand or the left.‡ Important alternative! For to those on the left hand the King will say, 'Depart from me ye cursed!'¶ If hitherto, while you have professed his name, you have had your heart filled with enmity against his doctrine and his people; if you have accounted his wisdom foolishness, and reproached the operations of his Spirit as enthusiasm and madness; it is to be hoped you have done it through ignorance, you knew not what you did;** there is then forgiveness with him; as yet he is upon a throne of grace. May the Spirit of God lead you to him before he takes his seat upon the throne of judgment! otherwise you are lost for ever. My heart's desire and prayer to God for my readers, will be, that not one of them may fall under that awful sentence, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish! for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.'

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. † John v. 39. ‡ 2 Pet. i. 16. § Acts xvii. 31. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 10. ¶ Matt. xxv. 41. ** 1 Tim. i. 13. Luke xxiii. 34, †† Acts xiii. 41.

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OLNEY HYMNS,

IN THREE BOOKS.

BOOK I.

ON SELECT TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

BOOK II.

ON OCCASIONAL SUBJECTS.

BOOK III.

ON THE PROGRESS AND CHANGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

——————Cantabitis, Arcades, inquit,
Montibus hæc vestris: soli cantare periti
Arcades. O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Vestra meos olim si fistula dicat amores!

VIRGIL, ECL. x. 31.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne:—and no man could learn that song, but the—redeemed from the earth. REV. xiv. 3.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.—2 COR. vi. 10.

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PREFACE.

Copies of a few of these Hymns have already appeared in periodical publications, and in some recent collections. I have observed one or two of them attributed to persons who certainly had no concern in them, but as transcribers. All that have been at different times parted with in manuscript are included in the present volume; and (if the information were of any great importance) the public may be assured, that the whole number were composed by two persons only. The original design would not admit of any other association. A desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere Christians, though the principal, was not the only motive to this undertaking. It was likewise intended as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship. With this pleasing view, I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and in a very different form, if the wise, though mysterious, providence of God had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan before my dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any further assistance. My grief and disappointment were great; I hung my harp upon the willows, and for some time thought myself determined to proceed no further without him. Yet my mind was afterwards led to resume the service. My progress in it, amidst a variety of other engagements, has been slow; yet, in a course of years, the Hymns amounted to a considerable number. And my deference to the judgment and desires of others, has at length overcome the reluctance I long felt to see them in print while I had so few of my friend's Hymns to insert in the collection. Though it is possible a good judge of composition might be able to distinguish those which are his, I have thought it proper to preclude a misapplication, by prefixing the letter C to each of them. For the rest I must be responsible.

There is a style and manner suited to the composition of hymns, which may be more successfully, or at least more easily, attained by a versifier, than by a poet. They should be *Hymns*, not *Odes*, if designed for public worship, and for the use of plain people. Perspicuity, simplicity,

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and ease, should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and colouring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly, and with great judgment. The late Dr. Watts, many of whose hymns are admirable patterns in this species of writing, might, as a poet, have a right to say, that it cost him some labour to restrain his fire, and to accommodate himself to the capacities of common readers. But it would not become me to make such a declaration. It behooved me to do my best. But though I would not offend readers of taste by a wilful coarseness and negligence, I do not write professedly for them. If the Lord, whom I serve, has been pleased to favour me with that mediocrity of talent which may qualify me for usefulness to the weak and the poor of his flock, without quite disgusting persons of superior discernment, I have reason to be satisfied.

As the workings of the heart of man, and of the Spirit of God, are in general the same in all who are the subjects of grace, I hope most of these hymns, being the fruit and expression of my own experience, will coincide with the views of real Christians of all denominations. But I cannot expect that every sentiment I have advanced will be universally approved. However, I am not conscious of having written a single line with an intention either to flatter or to offend any party or person upon earth. I have simply declared my own views and feelings, as I might have done if I had composed hymns in some of the newly-discovered islands in the South Sea, where no person had any knowledge of the name of Jesus, but myself. I am a friend of peace; and being deeply convinced that no one can profitably understand the great truths and doctrines of the Gospel any further than he is taught of God, I have not a wish to obtrude my own tenets upon others, in a way of controversy; yet I do not think myself bound to conceal them. Many gracious persons (for many such I am persuaded there are) who differ from me, more or less, in those points which are called Calvinistic, appear desirous that the Calvinists should, for their sakes, studiously avoid every expression which they cannot approve. Yet few of them, I believe, impose a like restraint upon themselves; but think the importance of what they deem to be truth, justifies them in speaking their sentiments plainly and strongly. May I not plead for an equal liberty? The views I have received of the doctrines of grace are essential to my peace; I could not live comfortably a day, or an hour, without them. I likewise believe, yea, so far as my poor attainments warrant me to speak, I know them to be friendly to holiness, and to have a direct influence in produ-

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ding and maintaining a Gospel conversation; and therefore I must not be ashamed of them.

The hymns are distributed into three books. In the first I have classed those which are formed upon select passages of scripture, and placed them in the order of the books of the Old and New Testament. The second contains Occasional Hymns, suited to particular seasons, or suggested by particular events or subjects. The third Book is miscellaneous, comprising a variety of subjects relative to a life of faith in the Son of God, which have no express reference either to a single text of Scripture, or to any determinate season or incident. These are further subdivided into distinct heads. This arrangement is not so accurate but that several of the hymns might have been differently disposed. Some attention to method may be found convenient; though a logical exactness was hardly practicable. As some subjects in the several books are nearly coincident, I have, under the divisions in the third Book, pointed out those which are similar in the two former. And I have likewise here and there, in the first and second, made a reference to hymns of a like import in the third.

This publication, which, with my humble prayer to the Lord for his blessing upon it, I offer to the service and acceptance of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, of every name and in every place, into whose hands it may come, I more particularly dedicate to my dear friends in the parish and neighbourhood of Olney, for whose use the hymns were originally composed; and as a testimony of the sincere love I bear them, and as a token of my gratitude to the Lord and to them, for the comfort and satisfaction with which the discharge of my ministry among them has been attended.

The hour is approaching, and, at my time of life, cannot be very distant, when my heart, my pen, and my tongue, will no longer be able to move in their service. But I trust, while my heart continues to beat, it will feel a warm desire for the prosperity of their souls; and while my hand can write, and my tongue speak, it will be the business and the pleasure of my life, to aim at promoting their growth and establishment in the grace of our God and Saviour. To this precious grace I commend them, and earnestly entreat them, and all who love his name, to strive mightily with their prayers to God for me, that I may be preserved faithful to the end, and enabled at last to finish my course with joy.

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Bucks, February 15, 1779.

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OLNEY HYMNS, &c.

BOOK I.

ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

GENESIS.

HYMN I. *Adam.* Chap. iii.

1 On man in his own image made,
How much did God bestow!
The whole creation homage paid,
And own'd him Lord below.

2 He dwelt in Eden's garden, stor'd
With sweets for ev'ry sense;
And there, with his descending Lord,
He walk'd in confidence.

3 But, oh! by sin how quickly chang'd!
His honour forfeited,
His heart from God and truth estrang'd,
His conscience fill'd with dread!

4 Now from his Maker's voice he flees,
Which was before his joy;
And thinks to hide, amidst the trees,
From an all-seeing eye.

5 Compell'd to answer to his name,
With stubbornness and pride,
He cast on God himself the blame;
Nor once for mercy cry'd.

6 But grace, unask'd, his heart subdu'd,
And all his guilt forgave;
By faith the promis'd Seed he view'd,
And felt his pow'r to save.

7 Thus we ourselves would justify,
Though we the law transgress;
Like him, unable to deny,
Unwilling to confess.

8 But when by faith the sinner sees
A pardon bought with blood,
Then he forsakes his foolish pleas,
And gladly turns to God.

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II. *Cain and Abel.* Chap. iv. 3—8.

1 When Adam fell, he quickly lost
God's image which he once possess'd:
See *all* our nature since could boast
In Cain, his first-born son, express'd!

2 The sacrifice the Lord ordain'd
In type of the Redeemer's blood,
Self-righteous reas'ning Cain disdain'd,
And thought his own first-fruits as good.

3 Yet rage and envy fill'd his mind,
When with a sullen downcast look,
He saw his brother favour find,
Who God's appointed method took.

4 By Cain's own hand good Abel died,
Because the Lord approv'd his faith;
And when his blood for vengeance cry'd
He vainly thought to hide his death.

5 Such was the wicked murd'rer Cain,
And such by nature still are we,
Until by grace we're born again,
Malicious, blind, and proud as he.

6 Like him, the way of grace we slight,
And in our own devices trust;
Call evil good, and darkness light,
And hate and persecute the just.

7 The saints in every age and place
Have found his history fulfill'd;
The numbers all our thoughts surpass,
Of Abels, whom the Cains have kill'd!*

8 Thus Jesus fell—but, oh! his blood
Far better things than Abel's cries,†
Obtains his murd'rers peace with God,
And gains them mansions in the skies.

III. C. *Walking with God.* Chap. v. 24.

1 Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heav'nly frame;
A light, to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

2 Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus, and his word?

3 What peaceful hours I once enjoy'd!
How sweet their mem'ry still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

* Rom. viii. 36. † Heb. xii. 24.

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4 Return, O holy Dove, return!
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

5 The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

6 So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

IV. *Another.*

1 By faith in Christ I walk with God,
With heav'n, my journey's end, in view;
Supported by his staff and rod,*
My road is safe and pleasant too.

2 I travel through a desert wide,
Where many round me blindly stray;
But he vouchsafes to be my guide,†
And will not let me miss my way.

3 Though snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand,
I triumph over all by faith,‡
Guarded by his almighty hand.

4 The wilderness affords no food,
But God for my support prepares;
Provides me ev'ry needful good,
And frees my soul from wants and cares.

5 With him sweet converse I maintain,
Great as he is, I dare be free,
I tell him all my grief and pain,
And he reveals his love to me.

6 Some cordial from his word he brings
When'er my feeble spirit faints;
At once my soul revives and sings,
And yields no more to sad complaints.

7 I pity all that worldlings talk
Of pleasures that will quickly end;
Be this my choice, O Lord, to walk
With thee, my Guide, my Guard, my Friend!

V. *Lot in Sodom.* Chap. xiii. 10.

1 How hurtful was the choice of Lot,
Who took up his abode,
(Because it was a fruitful spot,)
With them who fear'd not God!

* Psalm xxiii. 4. † Psalm cvii. ‡ Psalm xxvii. 1, 2.

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2 A pris'ner he was quickly made,
Bereav'd of all his store;
And, but for Abraham's timely aid,
He had return'd no more.

3 Yet still he seem'd resolv'd to stay
As if it were his rest;
Altho' their sins from day to day*
His righteous soul distress'd.

4 Awhile he stay'd with anxious mind,
Expos'd to scorn and strife;
At last he left his all behind,
And fled to save his life.

5 In vain his sons-in-law he warn'd,
They thought he told his dreams:
His daughters, too, of them had learn'd,
And perish'd in the flames.

6 His wife escap'd a little way,
But dy'd for looking back:
Does not her case to pilgrims say,
'Beware of growing slack?'

7 Yea, Lot himself could ling'ring stand,
Though vengeance was in view;
'Twas mercy pluck'd him by the hand,
Or he had perish'd too.

8 The doom of Sodom will be ours,
If to the earth we cleave;
Lord, quicken all our drowsy pow'rs,
To flee to thee and live.

VI. C. *Jehovah-Jireh. The Lord will provide.* Chap. xxii. 14.

1 The saints should never be dismay'd,
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect his aid,
The Saviour will appear.

2 This Abraham found, he rais'd the knife,
God saw, and said, 'Forbear:'
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life;
Behold the victim there.

3 Once David seem'd Saul's certain prey:
But, hark! the foe's at hand;†
Saul turns his arms another way,
To save th' invaded land.

4 When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,
He thought to rise no more;‡
But God prepar'd a fish to save
And bear him to the shore.

* 2 Peter ii. 8. † Sam. xxiii. 27. ‡ Jonah i. 17.

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5 Blest proofs of pow'r and grace divine,
That meet us in his word!
May ev'ry deep-felt care of mine
Be trusted with the Lord.

6 Wait for his seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, wait:
The promise may be long delay'd,
But cannot come too late.

VII. *The Lord will provide.*

1 THOUGH troubles assail, and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite;
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
The Scripture assures us, the Lord will provide.

2 The birds without barn, or storehouse, are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread;
His saints, what is fitting, shall ne'er be deny'd,
So long as 'tis written, the Lord will provide.

3 We may, like the ships, by tempests be tost
On perilous deeps, but cannot be lost;
Though Satan enrages the wind and the tide,
The promise engages, the Lord will provide.

4 His call we obey, like Abra'm of old,
Not knowing our way, but faith makes us bold;
For though we are strangers, we have a good guide,
And trust, in all dangers, the Lord will provide.

5 When Satan appears to stop up our path,
And fill us with fears, we triumph by faith:
He cannot take from us, though oft he has try'd
This heart-cheering promise, the Lord will provide.

6 He tells us we're weak, our hope is in vain,
The good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain;
But when such suggestions our spirits have ply'd,
This answers all questions, the Lord will provide.

7 No strength of our own, or goodness, we claim;
Yet since we have known the Saviour's great name,
In this our strong tow'r for safety we hide,
The Lord is our pow'r, the Lord will provide.

8 When life sinks apace, and death is in view,
This word of his grace shall comfort us through:
No fearing or doubting with Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting, the Lord will provide.

VIII. *Esau.* Chap. xxv. 34. Heb. xii. 16.

1 POOR Esau repented too late,
That once he his birth-right despis'd,
And sold, for a morsel of meat,
What could not too highly be priz'd:

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How great was his anguish when told,
The blessing he sought to obtain
Was gone with the birth-right he sold,
And none could recall it again!

2 He stands as a warning to all,
Wherever the Gospel shall come;
O hasten and yield to the call,
While yet for repentance there's room!
Your season will quickly be past;
Then hear and obey it to-day,
Lest, when you seek mercy at last,
The Saviour should frown you away.

3 What is it the world can propose?
A morsel of meat at the best!
For this are you willing to lose
A share in the joys of the blest?
Its pleasures will speedily end,
Its favour and praise are but breath;
And what can its profits befriend
Your soul in the moments of death?

4 If Jesus, for these, you despise,
And sin to the Saviour prefer;
In vain your entreaties and cries,
When summon'd to stand at his bar:
How will you his presence abide?
What anguish will torture your heart!
The saints all enthron'd by his side,
And you be compell'd to depart.

5 Too often, dear Saviour, have I
Preferr'd some poor trifle to thee;
How is it thou dost not deny
The blessing and birth-right to me?
No better than Esau I am,
Though pardon and heaven be mine;
To me belongs nothing but shame,
The praise and the glory be thine.

IX. *Jacob's Ladder.* Chap. xxviii. 12.

1 If the Lord our leader be,
We may follow without fear;
East or west, by land or sea,
Home, with him, is ev'ry where:
When from Esau Jacob fled,
Though his pillow was a stone,
And the ground his humble bed,
Yet he was not left alone.

2 Kings are often waking kept,
Rack'd with cares on beds of state;
Never king like Jacob slept,
For he lay at heaven's gate:

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Lo! he saw a ladder rear'd,
Reaching to the heav'nly throne;
At the top the Lord appear'd,
Spake, and claim'd him for his own:

3 "Fear not, Jacob, thou art mine,
"And my presence with the goes:
"On thy heart my love shall shine,
"And my arm subdue thy foes:
"From my promise comfort take,
"For my help in trouble call;
"Never will I thee forsake,
"Till I have accomplish'd all."

4 Well does Jacob's ladder suit
To the Gospel-throne of grace;
We are at the ladder's foot
Ev'ry hour, in ev'ry place:
By assuming flesh and blood,
Jesus, heav'n and earth unites;
We, by faith, ascend to God,*
God to dwell with us delights.

5 They who know the Saviour's name,
Are for all events prepar'd;
What can changes do to them
Who have such a guide and guard?
Should they traverse earth around,
To the ladder still they come:
Ev'ry spot is holy ground,
God is there—and he's their home.

X. *My name is Jacob.* Chap. xxxii. 27.

1 NAY, I cannot let thee go,
Till a blessing thou bestow;
Do not turn away thy face,
Mine's an urgent, pressing case.

2 Dost thou ask me, who I am?
Ah! my Lord, thou know'st my name:
Yet the question gives a plea
To support my suit with thee.

3 Thou didst once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold,
Scorn thy grace, thy pow'r defy,
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

4 Once a sinner, near despair,
Sought thy mercy seat by pray'r:
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me.

5 Many years have pass'd since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now:
Who could hold me up but thou?

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

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6 Thou hast help'd in ev'ry need,
This emboldens me to plead;
After so much mercy past,
Canst thou let me sink at last?

7 No—I must maintain my hold,
'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take
When I plead for Jesus' sake.

XI. *Plenty in the time of Dearth.* Chap. xli. 56.

1 My soul once had its plenteous years,
And throve, with peace and comfort fill'd,
Like the fat kine and ripen'd ears
Which Pharaoh in his dream beheld.

2 With pleasing frames and grace receiv'd,
With means and ordinances fed,
How happy for a while I liv'd,
And little fear'd the want of bread!

3 But famine came, and left no sign
Of all the plenty I had seen;
Like the dry ears and half-starv'd kine,
I then look'd wither'd, faint, and lean.

4 To Joseph the Egyptians went;
To Jesus I made known my case;
He, when my little stock was spent,
Open'd his magazine of grace.

5 For he the time of dearth foresaw,
And made provision long before;
That famish'd souls like me might draw
Supplies from his unbounded store.

6 Now on his bounty I depend,
And live from fear of dearth secure;
Maintain'd by such a mighty Friend,
I cannot want till he is poor.

7 O sinners, hear his gracious call!
His mercy's door stands open wide;
He has enough to feed you all,
And none who come shall be deny'd.

XII. *Joseph made known to his brethren.* Chap. xli. 3, 4.

1 When Joseph his brethren beheld,
Afflicted and trembling with fear,
His heart with compassion was fill'd;
From weeping he could not forbear.
Awhile his behaviour was rough,
To bring their past sin to their mind;
But when they were humbled enough,
He hasten'd to show himself kind.

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2 How little they thought it was he
Whom they had ill-treated and sold!
How great their confusion must be
As soon as his name he had told!
"I'm Joseph, your brother," he said,
"And still to my heart you are dear;
"You sold me, and thought I was dead,
"But God, for your sakes, sent me here."

3 Though greatly distressed before,
When charg'd with purloining the cup,
They now were confounded much more,
Not one of them durst to look up.
"Can Joseph, whom we would have slain,
"Forgive us the evil we did;
"And will he our households maintain?
"O this is a brother indeed!"

4 Thus dragg'd by my conscience, I came,
And laden with guilt, to the Lord,
Surrounded with terror and shame,
Unable to utter a word.
At first he look'd stern and severe;
What anguish then pierced my heart!
Expecting each moment to hear
The sentence, "Thou cursed, depart!"

5 But, oh! what surprise when he spoke,
While tenderness beam'd in his face;
My heart then to pieces was broke,
O'erwhelm'd and confounded by grace:
"Poor sinner, I know thee full well,
"By thee I was sold and was slain;
"But I dy'd to redeem thee from hell,
"And raise thee in glory to reign.

6 "I'm Jesus, whom thou hast blasphem'd,
"And crucify'd often afresh;
"But let me henceforth be esteem'd,
"Thy brother, thy bone, and thy flesh:
"My pardon I freely bestow,
"Thy wants I will fully supply;
I'll guide thee and guard thee below,
"And soon will remove thee on high.

7 "Go, publish to sinners around,
"That they may be willing to come,
"The mercy which now you have found,
"And tell them that yet there is room."
Oh, sinners, the message obey!
No more vain excuses pretend;
But come, without further delay,
To Jesus, our brother and friend.

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EXODUS.

XIII. *The Bitter Waters.* Chap. xv. 23—25.

1 Bitter, indeed, the waters are
Which in this desert flow;
Though to the eye they promise fair,
They taste of sin and wo.

2 Of pleasing draughts I once could dream;
But now awake, I find,
That sin has poison'd ev'ry stream,
And left a curse behind.

3 But there's a wonder-working wood,
I've heard believers say,
Can make these bitter waters good,
And take the curse away.

4 The virtues of this healing tree
Are known and priz'd by few:
Reveal this secret, Lord, to me,
That I may prize it too.

5 The cross on which the Saviour dy'd,
And conquer'd for his saints;
This is the tree, by faith apply'd,
Which sweetens all complaints.

6 Thousands have found the bless'd effect,
Nor longer mourn their lot;
While on his sorrows they reflect,
Their own are all forgot.

7 When they, by faith, behold the cross,
Though many griefs they meet;
They draw a gain from ev'ry loss,
And find the bitter sweet.

XIV. C. *Jehovah Rophi,—I am the Lord that healeth thee.* Chap. xv.

1 Heal us, Immanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel thy touch;
Deep wounded souls to thee repair,
And, Saviour, we are such.

2 Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust thy word;
But wilt thou pity us the less?
Be that far from the Lord!

3 Remember him who once apply'd,
With trembling, for relief;
"Lord, I believe," with tears he cried,
"O help my unbelief."*

* Mark ix. 24.

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4 She too, who touch'd thee in the press,
And healing virtue stole,
Was answer'd "Daughter, go in peace,
"Thy faith hath made thee whole."*

5 Conceal'd amid the gath'ring throng,
She would have shunn'd thy view;
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.

6 Like her, with hopes and fears we come,
To touch thee if we may;
Oh! send us not despairing home,
Send none unheal'd away.

XV. *Manna.* Chap. xvi. 18.

1 MANNA to Israel well supply'd
The want of other bread;
While God is able to provide,
His people shall be fed.

2 (Thus though the corn and wine should fail,
And creature streams be dry,
The pray'r of faith will still prevail,
For blessings from on high.)

3 Of his kind care how sweet a proof!
It suited ev'ry taste:
Who gather'd most had just enough,
Enough, who gather'd least.

4 'Tis thus our gracious Lord provides
Our comforts and our cares;
His own unerring hand provides,
And gives us each our shares.

5 He knows how much the weak can bear,
And helps them when they cry;
The strongest have no strength to spare,
For such he'll strongly try.

6 Daily they saw the Manna come,
And cover all the ground;
But what they try'd to keep at home,
Corrupted soon was found.

7 Vain their attempt to store it up,
This was to tempt the Lord;
Israel must live by faith and hope,
And not upon a hoard.

XVI. *Manna hoarded.* Chap. xvi. 20.

1 THE Manna, favour'd Israel's meat,
Was gather'd day by day;
When all the host was serv'd, the heat
Melted the rest away.

* Mark v. 34.

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2 In vain to hoard it up they try'd,
Against to-morrow came;
It then bred worms and putrefy'd,
And prov'd their sin and shame.

3 'Twas daily bread, and would not keep,
But must be still renew'd;
Faith should not want a hoard or heap,
But trust the Lord for food.

4 The truths by which the soul is fed,
Must thus be had afresh;
For notions resting in the head
Will only feed the flesh.

5 However true, they have no life
Or unction to impart;
They breed the worms of pride and strife,
But cannot cheer the heart.

6 Nor can the best experience past
The life of faith maintain;
The brightest hope will faint at last,
Unless supply'd again.

7 Dear Lord, while we in pray'r are found,
Do thou the Manna give;
Oh! let it fall on all around,
That we may eat and live.

XVII C. *Jehovah Nissi,—The Lord my banner.* Chap. xvii. 15.

1 By whom was David taught
To aim the dreadful blow,
When he Goliath fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
No sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

2 'Twas Israel's God and King,
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

3 Who order'd Gideon forth
To storm the invaders' camp,
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?*
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

4 Oh! I have seen the day,
When, with a single word,
God helping me to say,
My trust is in the Lord,

* Judges vii. 20.

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My soul has quell'd a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

5 But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side?
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's Friend,
Will help his servant to the end.

XVIII. *The Golden Calf.* Chap. xxxii. 4. 31.

1 When Israel heard the fiery law
From Sinai's top proclaim'd,
Their hearts seem'd full of holy awe,
Their stubborn spirits tam'd.

2 Yet, as forgetting all they knew,
Ere forty days were past,
With blazing Sinai still in view,
A molten calf they cast.

3 Yea, Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Who on the mount had been,
He durst prepare the idol beast,
And lead them on to sin.

4 Lord, what is man, and what are we,
To recompense thee thus!
In their offence our own we see,
Their story points at us.

5 From Sinai we heard thee speak,
And from mount Calv'ry too;
And yet to idols oft we seek,
While thou art in our view.

6 Some golden calf, or golden dream,
Some fancied creature-good,
Presumes to share the heart with him,
Who bought the whole with blood.

7 Lord, save us from our golden calves,
Our sin with grief we own;
We would no more be thine by halves,
But live to thee alone.

LEVITICUS.

XIX. *The true Aaron.* Chap. viii. 7—9.

1 See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the vail appear,
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer.

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2 The plate of gold which crowns his brows,
His holiness describes;
His breast displays, in shining rows,
The names of all the tribes.

3 With the atoning blood he stands
Before the mercy seat;
And clouds of incense from his hands
Arise with odour sweet.

4 Urim and Thummim near his heart,
In rich engravings worn,
The sacred light of truth impart,
To teach and to adorn.

5 Through him the eye of faith descries,
A greater priest than he:
Thus Jesus pleads above the skies,
For you my friends, and me.

6 He bears the names of all his saints
Deep on his heart engrav'd;
Attentive to the state and wants
Of all his love has sav'd.

7 In him a holiness complete,
Light and perfections shine;
And wisdom, grace, and glory meet;
A Saviour all divine.

8 The blood, which as a priest he bears
For sinners, is his own;
The incense of his prayers and tears
Perfume the holy throne.

9 In him my weary soul has rest,
Though I am weak and vile;
I read my name upon his breast,
And see the Father smile.

NUMBERS.

XX. *Balaam's Wish.** Chap. xxiii. 10.

1 How blest the righteous are
When they resign their breath!
No wonder Balaam wish'd to share
In such a happy death.

2 "Oh! let me die," said he,
"The death the righteous do;
"When life is ended, let me be
"Found with the faithful few."

* Book iii. Hymn 71.

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3 The force of truth how great!
When enemies confess,
None but the righteous, whom they hate,
A solid hope possess.

4 But Balaam's wish was vain,
His heart was insincere;
He thirsted for unrighteous gain,
And sought a portion here.

5 He seem'd the Lord to know,
And to offend him loath;
But Mammon prov'd his overthrow,
For none can serve them both.

6 May you, my friends, and I,
Warning from hence receive;
If like the righteous we would die,
To choose the life they live.

JOSHUA.

XXI. *Gibeon.* Chap. x. 6.

1 When Joshua, by God's command,
Invaded Canaan's guilty land,
Gibeon, unlike the nations round,
Submission made, and mercy found.

2 Their stubborn neighbours who, enrag'd;
United war against them wag'd,
By Joshua soon were overthrown,
For Gibeon's cause was now his own.

3 He from whose arm they ruin fear'd,
Their leader and ally appear'd;
An emblem of the Saviour's grace,
To those who humbly seek his face.

4 The men of Gibeon wore disguise,
And gain'd their peace by framing lies;
For Joshua had no power to spare,
If he had known from whence they were.

5 But Jesus invitation sends,
Treating with rebels as his friends;
And holds the promise forth in view,
To all who for his mercy sue.

6 Too long his goodness I disdain'd,
Yet went at last and peace obtain'd;
But soon the noise of war I hear'd,
And former friends in arms appear'd.

7 Weak in myself, for help I cried,
"Lord, I am press'd on ev'ry side;
"The cause is thine, they fight with me,
"But ev'ry blow is aim'd at thee."

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8 With speed to my relief he came,
And put my enemies to shame;
Thus sav'd by grace, I live to sing
The love and triumphs of my King.

JUDGES.

XXII. C. *Jehovah Shalem,—The Lord send peace.* Chap. vi. 24.

1 Jesus, whose blood so freely stream'd
To satisfy the law's demand,
By thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.

2 To reconcile offending man,
Make justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfil it, but a God?

3 No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserv'd the whole
No arrows dipt in wrath, to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.

4 Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hop'd to see?
Peace, by his injur'd Sov'reign wrought,
His Sov'reign fasten'd to a tree.

5 Now, Lord, thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth and hell begins;
Confirm and gird me for the war,
They hate the soul that hates his sins.

6 Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord my peace.

XXIII. *Gideon's Fleece.* Chap. vi. 37—40.

1 The signs which God to Gideon gave,
His holy sov'reignty made known,
That He alone has pow'r to save,
And claims the glory as his own.

2 The dew which first the fleece had fill'd
When all the earth was dry around,
Was from it afterwards withheld,
And only fell upon the ground.

3 To Israel thus the heavenly dew
Of saving-truth was long restrain'd:
Of which the Gentiles nothing knew,
But dry and desolate remain'd.

4 But now the Gentiles have receiv'd
The balmy dew of Gospel peace;
And Israel, who his Spirit griev'd,
Is left a dry and empty fleece.

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5 This dew still falls at his command,
To keep his chosen plants alive;
They shall, though in a thirsty land,
Like willows by the waters thrive.*

6 But chiefly when his people meet,
To hear his word and seek his face;
The gentle dew, with influence sweet,
Descends and nourishes their grace.

7 But, ah! what numbers still are dead,
Though under means of grace they lie!
The dew still falling round their head,
And yet their heart untouch'd and dry.

8 Dear Saviour, hear us when we call,
To wrestling pray'r an answer give;
Pour down thy dew upon us all,
That all may feel, and all may live.

XXIV. *Samson's Lion.* Chap. xiv. 8.

1 The lion that on Samson roar'd
And thirsted for his blood,
With honey afterwards was stor'd,
And furnish'd him with food.

2 Believers, as they pass along,
With many lions meet,
But gather sweetness from the strong,
And from the eater, meat.

3 The lions rage and roar in vain,
For Jesus is their shield;
Their losses prove a certain gain,
Their troubles comfort yield.

4 The world and Satan join their strength,
To fill their souls with fears;
But crops of joy they reap at length,
From what they sow in tears.

5 Afflictions make them love the word,
Stir up their hearts to pray'r;
And many precious proofs afford
Of their Redeemer's care.

6 The lions roar, but cannot kill;
Then fear them not, my friends,
They bring us, though against their will,
The honey Jesus sends.

I. SAMUEL.

XXV. *Hannah; or, the Throne of Grace.* Chap. i. 18.

1 When Hannah, press'd with grief,
Pour'd forth her soul in pray'r,
She quickly found relief,
And left her burden there:

* Isa. xliv. 4.

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Like her, in ev'ry trying case,
Let us approach the throne of grace.

2 When she began to pray,
Her heart was pain'd and sad,
But, ere she went away,
Was comforted and glad:
In trouble, what a resting-place
Have they who know the throne of grace!

3 Though men and devils rage,
And threaten to devour;
The saints, from age to age,
Are safe from all their pow'r;
Fresh strength they gain to run their race,
By waiting at the throne of grace.

4 Eli her case mistook;
How was her spirit mov'd
By his unkind rebuke?
But God her cause approv'd.
We need not fear a creature's face,
While welcome at a throne of grace.

5 She was not fill'd with wine,
As Eli rashly thought;
But with a faith divine,
And found the help she sought:
Though men despise, and call us base,
Still let us ply the throne of grace.

6 Men have not pow'r nor skill
With troubled souls to bear;
Though they express good-will,
Poor comforters they are:
But swelling sorrows sink apace,
When we approach the throne of grace.

7 Numbers before have try'd,
And found the promise true;
Nor yet one been deny'd;
Then why should I or you?
Let us, by faith, their footsteps trace,
And hasten to the throne of grace.

8 As fogs obscure the light,
And taint the morning air,
But soon are put to flight
If the bright sun appear;
Thus Jesus will our troubles chase,
By shining from the throne of grace.*

XXVI. *Dagon before the Ark.* Chap. v. 4, 5.

1 When first to make my heart his own,
The Lord reveal'd his mighty grace
Self reign'd like Dagon, on the throne,
But could not long maintain its place.

* Book ii. Hymn 61.

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2 It fell, and own'd the pow'r divine,
(Grace can, with ease, the vict'ry gain,)
But soon this wretched heart of mine
Contriv'd to set it up again.

3 Again the Lord his name proclaim'd,
And brought the hateful idol low;
Then self, like Dagon, broken, maim'd,
Seem'd to receive a mortal blow.

4 Yet self is not of life bereft,
Nor ceases to oppose his will;
Though but a maimed stump be left,
'Tis Dagon, 'tis an idol still.

5 Lord! must I always guilty prove,
And idols in my heart have room?*
Oh! let the fire of heav'nly love
The very stump of self consume.

XXVII. *The Milch Kine drawing the Ark: Faith's surrender of all.* Chap. vi. 12.

1 THE kine unguided went
By the directest road,
When the Philistines homeward sent
The ark of Israel's God.

2 Lowing they pass'd along,
And left their calves shut up;
They felt an instinct for their young,
But would not turn or stop.

3 Shall brutes, devoid of thought,
Their Maker's will obey;
And we, who by his grace are taught,
More stubborn prove than they.

4 He shed his precious blood
To make us his alone;
If wash'd in that atoning flood,
We are no more our own.

5 If he his will reveal,
Let us obey his call;
And think, whate'er the flesh may feel,
His love deserves our all.

6 We should maintain in view
His glory, as our end;
Too much we cannot bear, or do,
For such a matchless friend.

7 His saints should stand prepar'd
In duty's path to run:
Nor count their greatest trials hard,
So that his will be done.

* Hosea xiv. 8.

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8 With Jesus for our guide,
The path is safe, though rough;
The promise says, "I will provide,"
And faith replies, "Enough!"

XXVIII. *Saul's Armour.* Chap. xvii. 38—40.

1 When first my soul enlisted, my Saviour's foes to fight,
Mistaken friends insisted I was not arm'd aright:
So Saul advised David he certainly would fail,
Nor could his life be saved without a coat of mail.

2 But David, though he yielded to put the armour on,
Soon found he could not wield it, and ventur'd forth with none.
With only sling and pebble, he fought the fight of faith:
The weapons seem'd but feeble, yet prov'd Goliath's death.

3 Had I by him been guided, and quickly thrown away
The armour men provided, I might have gain'd the day;
But arm'd as they advis'd me, my expectations fail'd;
My enemy surpris'd me, and had almost prevail'd.

4 Furnish'd with books and notions, and arguments and pride,
I practis'd all my motions, and Satan's pow'r defy'd:
But soon perceiv'd, with trouble, that these would do no good;
Iron to him is stubble, and brass like rotten wood.*

5 I triumph'd at a distance, while he was out of sight,
But faint was my resistance, when forc'd to join in fight:
He broke my sword in shivers, and pierc'd my boasted shield,
Laugh'd at my vain endeavours, and drove me from the field.

6 Satan will not be braved by such a worm as I;
Then let me learn, with David, to trust in the Most High;
To plead the name of Jesus, and use the sling of pray'r:
Thus arm'd when Satan sees us, he'll tremble and despair.

II. SAMUEL.

XXIX. *David's Fall.* Chap. xi. 27.

1 How David, when by sin deceiv'd,
From bad to worse went on!
For when the holy Spirit's griev'd,
Our strength and guard are gone.

2 His eye, on Bathsheba once fix'd,
With poison fill'd his soul;
He ventur'd on adult'ry next,
And murder crown'd the whole.

3 So from a spark of fire at first,
That has not been descry'd,
A dreadful flame has often burst,
And ravag'd far and wide.

* Job xli. 27.

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4 When sin deceives, it hardens too;
For, though he vainly sought
To hide his crimes from public view,
Of God he little thought.

5 He neither would, nor could, repent,
No true compunction felt,
'Till God, in mercy, Nathan sent,
His stubborn heart to melt.

6 The parable held forth a fact,
Design'd his case to show;
But, though the picture was exact,
Himself he did not know.

7 "Thou art the man," the prophet said;
That word his slumber broke:
And when he own'd his sin, and pray'd,
The Lord forgiveness spoke.

8 Let those, who think they stand, beware,
For David stood before;
Nor let the fallen soul despair,
For mercy can restore.

XXX. *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* Chap. xvi. 17.

1 Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am,
I have a rich, almighty Friend;
Jesus, the Saviour, is his name,
He freely loves, and without end.

2 He ransom'd me from hell with blood,
And by his pow'r my foes controll'd;
He found me wand'ring far from God,
And brought me to his chosen fold.

3 He cheers my heart, my want supplies,
And says, that I shall shortly be
Enthron'd with him above the skies—
Oh! what a friend is Christ to me!

4 But, ah! my inmost spirit mourns,
And well my eyes with tears may swim,
To think of my perverse returns;
I've been a faithless friend to him.

5 Often my gracious Friend I grieve,
Neglect, distrust, and disobey;
And often Satan's lies believe
Sooner than all my Friend can say.

6 He bids me always freely come,
And promises whate'er I ask:
But I am straiten'd, cold, and dumb,
And count my privilege a task.

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7 Before the world, that hates his cause,
My treach'rous heart has throbb'd with shame;
Loath to forego the world's applause,
I hardly dare avow his name.

8 Sure were not I most vile and base,
I could not thus my Friend requite!
And were not he the God of grace,
He'd frown and spurn me from his sight.

I. KINGS.

XXXI. *Ask what I shall give thee.* Chap. iii. 5.

1 Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer pray'r;
He himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay.

2 Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;*
For his grace and pow'r are such,
None can ever ask too much.

3 With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin!
Let thy blood, for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt.

4 Lord! I come to thee for rest,
Take possession of my breast;
There thy blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign.

5 As the image in the glass
Answer's the beholder's face;
Thus unto my heart appear,
Print thine own resemblance there.

6 While I am a pilgrim here,
Let thy love my spirit cheer;
As my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,
Lead me to my journey's end.

7 Show me what I have to do,
Ev'ry hour my strength renew;
Let me live a life of faith,
Let me die thy people's death.

XXXII. *Another.*

1 If Solomon for wisdom pray'd,
The Lord before had made him wise;
Else he another choice had made,
And ask'd for what the worldlings prize.

* Psalm lxxxi. 10.

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2 Thus he invites his people still;
He first instructs them how to choose,
Then bids them ask whate'er they will,
Assur'd that He will not refuse.

3 Our wishes would our ruin prove,
Could we our wretched choice obtain,
Before we feel the Saviour's love
Kindle our love to him again.

4 But when our hearts perceive his worth,
Desires, till then unknown, take place;
Our spirits cleave no more to earth,
But pant for holiness and grace.

5 And dost thou say, "Ask what thou wilt?"
Lord, I would seize the golden hour;
I pray to be releas'd from guilt,
And freed from sin and Satan's pow'r.

6 More of thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of thine image let me bear;
Erect thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there.

7 Give me to read my pardon seal'd,
And from thy joy to draw my strength;
To have thy boundless love reveal'd
In all its height, and breadth, and length.

8 Grant these requests, I ask no more,
But to thy care the rest resign;
Sick, or in health, or rich, or poor,
All shall be well if thou art mine.

XXXIII. *Another.*

1 BEHOLD the throne of grace!
The promise calls me near;
There Jesus shows a smiling face,
And waits to answer pray'r.

2 That rich atoning blood
Which sprinkled round I see,
Provides for those who come to God
An all-prevailing plea.

3 My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold;
Since his own blood for thee he spilt,
What else can he withhold?

4 Beyond thy utmost wants
His love and pow'r can bless;
To praying souls he always grants
More than they can express:

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5 Since 'tis the Lord's command,
My mouth I open wide;
Lord, open thou thy bounteous hand,
That I may be supply'd.

6 Thine image, Lord, bestow,
Thy presence and thy love;
I ask to serve thee here below,
And reign with thee above.

7 Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to thine;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

8 If thou these blessings give,
And wilt my portion be,
Cheerful the world's poor toys I leave
To them who know not thee.

XXXIV. *Queen of Sheba.* Chap. x. 1—9.

1 FROM Sheba a distant report
Of Solomon's glory and fame,
Invited the queen to his court,
But all was outdone when she came;
She cry'd, with a pleased surprise,
When first she before him appear'd,
"How much what I see with my eyes
Surpasses the rumour I heard!"

2 When once to Jerusalem come,
The treasure and train she had brought,
The wealth she possessed at home,
No longer had place in her thought:
His house, his attendants, his throne,
All struck her with wonder and awe;
The glory of Solomon shone
In every object she saw.

3 But Solomon most she admir'd,
Whose spirit conducted the whole;
His wisdom, which God had inspir'd,
His bounty and greatness of soul;
Of all the hard questions she put,
A ready solution he show'd;
Exceeded her wish and her suit,
And more than she ask'd him bestow'd.

4 Thus I, when the Gospel proclaim'd
The Saviour's great name in my ears,
The wisdom for which he is fam'd,
The love which to sinners he bears,
I long'd, and I was not deny'd,
That I in his presence might bow:
I saw, and transported I cry'd,
"A greater than Solomon Thou!"

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5 My conscience no comfort could find,
By doubt and hard questions oppos'd;
But he restor'd peace to my mind,
And answer'd each doubt I propos'd:
Beholding me poor and distress'd,
His bounty supply'd all my wants;
My pray'r could have never express'd
So much as this Solomon grants.

6 I heard, and was slow to believe,
But now with my eyes I behold
Much more than my heart could conceive,
Or language could ever have told.
How happy thy servants must be,
Who always before thee appear!
Vouchsafe, Lord, this blessing to me,
I find it is good to be here.

XXXV. *Elijah fed by Ravens.** Chap. xvii. 6.

1 ELIJAH's example declares,
Whatever distress may betide,
The saints may commit all their cares
To Him who will surely provide.
When rain long withheld from the earth
Occasion'd a famine of bread,
The prophet, secur'd from the dearth,
By ravens was constantly fed.

2 More likely to rob, than to feed,
Were ravens, who live upon prey;
But when the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way:
This instance to those may seem strange,
Who know not how faith can prevail;
But sooner all nature shall change,
Than one of God's promises fail.

3 Nor is it a singular case,
The wonder is often renew'd;
And many can say, to his praise,
He sends them, by ravens, their food:
Thus worldlings, though ravens indeed,
Though greedy and selfish their mind,
If God has a servant to feed,
Against their own wills can be kind.

4 Thus Satan, that raven unclean,
Who croaks in the ears of the saints,
Compell'd by a power unseen,
Administers oft to their wants:
God teaches them how to find food
From all the temptations they feel;
This raven, who thirsts for my blood,
Has help'd me to many a meal.

* Book iii. Hymn 47.

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5 How safe, and how happy are they,
Who on the good Shepherd rely!
He gives them out strength for their day,
Their wants he will surely supply:
He ravens and lions can tame,
All creatures obey his command;
Then let me rejoice in his name,
And leave all my cares in his hand.

XXXVI. *The Meal and Cruse of Oil.* Chap. xvii. 16.

1 By the poor widow's oil and meal
Elijah was sustain'd;
Though small the stock, it lasted well,
For God the store maintain'd.

2 It seem'd as if, from day to day,
They were to eat and die;
But still, though in a secret way,
He sent a fresh supply.

3 Thus to his poor he still will give
Just for the present hour;
But for to-morrow they must live
Upon his word and pow'r,

4 No barn nor storehouse they possess
On which they can depend;
Yet have no cause to fear distress,
For Jesus is their friend.

5 Then let not doubts your mind assail,
Remember God has said
"The cruse and barrel shall not fail,
"My people shall be fed."

6 And thus, though faint, it often seems
He keeps their grace alive;
Supply'd by his refreshing streams,
Their dying hopes revive.

7 Though in ourselves we have no stock,
The Lord is nigh to save;
His door flies open when we knock,
And 'tis but ask and have.

II. KINGS.

XXXVII. *Jericho; or, the Waters healed.* Chap. ii. 19—22.

1 Though Jericho pleasantly stood,
And look'd like a promising soil,
The harvest produc'd little food,
To answer the husbandman's toil.
The water some property had
Which poisonous prov'd to the ground;
The springs were corrupted and bad,
The streams spread a barrenness round.

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2 But soon by the cruse and the salt,
Prepar'd by Elisha's command,
The water was cur'd of its fault,
And plenty enriched the land;
An emblem sure this of the grace
On fruitless dead sinners bestow'd;
For man is in Jericho's case,
Till cur'd by the mercy of God.

3 How noble a creature he seems;
What knowledge, invention, and skill!
How large and extensive his schemes!
How much can he do if he will!
His zeal to be learned and wise
Will yield to no limits or bars;
He measures the earth and the skies,
And numbers and marshals the stars.

4 Yet still he is barren of good;
In vain are his talents and art;
For sin has infected his blood,
And poison'd the streams of his heart;
Though cockatrice eggs he can hatch,
Or, spider-like, cobwebs can weave,*
'Tis madness to labour and watch
For what will destroy or deceive.

5 But grace, like the salt in the cruse,
When cast in the spring of the soul,
A wonderful change will produce,
Diffusing new life through the whole:
The wilderness blooms like a rose,
The heart which was vile and abhorr'd,
Now fruitful and beautiful grows,
The garden and joy of the Lord.

XXXVIII. *Naaman.* Chap. v. 14.

1 Before Elisha's gate the Syrian leper stood;
But could not brook to wait, he deem'd himself too good:
He thought the prophet would attend,
And not to him a message send.

2 Have I this journey come, and will he not be seen?
I were as well at home, would washing make me clean;
Why must I wash in Jordan's flood?
Damascus' rivers are as good.

3 Thus by his foolish pride, he almost miss'd a cure;
Howe'er, at length he try'd, and found the method sure:
Soon as his pride was brought to yield,
The leprosy was quickly heal'd.

4 Leprous and proud as he, to Jesus thus I came,
From sin to set me free, when first I heard his fame:

* Isa. lix. 5.

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Surely, thought I, my pompous train
Of vows and tears will notice gain.

5 My heart devis'd the way which I suppos'd he'd take;
And when I found delay, was ready to go back,
Had he some painful task enjoin'd,
I to performance seem'd inclin'd.

6 When by his word he spake, "That fountain open'd see;
"'Twas open'd for thy sake; go wash, and thou art free:
Oh! how did my proud heart gainsay,
I fear'd to trust this simple way!

7 At length I trial made, when I had much endur'd;
The message I obey'd—I wash'd, and I was cur'd:
Sinners, this healing fountain try,
Which cleans'd a wretch so vile as I.

XXXIX. *The Borrowed Axe.* Chap. vi. 5, 6.

1 THE prophet's sons, in times of old,
Though to appearance poor,
Were rich without possessing gold,
And honour'd though obscure.

2 In peace their daily bread they eat,
By honest labour earn'd;
While daily at Elisha's feet
They grace and wisdom learn'd.

3 The prophet's presence cheer'd their toil,
They watch'd the words he spoke,
Whether they turn'd the furrow'd soil,
Or fell'd the spreading oak.

4 Once, as they listen'd to his theme,
Their conference was stopp'd;
For one beneath the yielding stream
A borrow'd axe had dropp'd.

5 "Alas! it was not mine," he said,
"How shall I make it good?"
Elisha heard, and when he pray'd,
The iron swam like wood.

6 If God, in such a small affair,
A miracle performs,
It shows his condescending care
Of poor unworthy worms.

7 Though kings and nations, in his view,
Are but as motes and dust,
His eye and ear are fix'd on you,
Who in his mercy trust.

8 Not one concern of ours is small,
If we belong to him;
To teach us this, the Lord of all
Once made the iron swim.

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XL. *More with us than with them.* Chap. vi. 16.

1 Alas! Elisha's servant cry'd,
When he the Syrian army spy'd:
But he was soon releas'd from care,
In answer to the prophet's pray'r.

2 Straightway he saw, with other eyes,
A greater army from the skies,
A fiery guard around the hill:
Thus are the saints preserved still.

3 When Satan and his host appear,
Like him, of old, I faint and fear;
Like him, by faith, with joy I see
A greater host engag'd for me.

4 The saints espouse my cause by pray'r,
The angels make my soul their care;
Mine is the promise seal'd with blood,
And Jesus lives to make it good.

I. CHRONICLES.

XLI. *Faith's Review and Expectation.* Chap. xvii. 16, 17.

1 Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound,)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believ'd!

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promis'd good to me,
His word my hope secures:
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

5 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the vail,
A life of joy and peace.

6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call'd me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

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NEHEMIAH.

XLII. *The Joy of the Lord is your Strength.* Chap. viii. 10.

1 Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

2 But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known,
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone.

3 A bleeding Saviour seen by faith,
A sense of pard'ning love;
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.

4 To take a glimpse within the vail,
To know that God is mine,
Are springs of joy that never fail,
Unspeakable! divine!

5 These are the joys which satisfy
And sanctify the mind;
Which makes the spirit mount on high,
And leave the world behind.

6 No more, believers, mourn your lot;
But if you are the Lord's,
Resign to them that know him not
Such joys as earth affords.

JOB.

XLIII. *Oh that I were as in months past!* Chap. xxix. 2.

1 Sweet was the time when first I felt
The Saviour's pard'ning blood
Apply'd, to cleanse my soul from guilt,
And bring me home to God.

2 Soon as the morn the light reveal'd,
His praises tun'd my tongue;
And when the ev'ning shades prevail'd,
His love was all my song.

3 In vain the tempter spread his wiles,
The world no more could charm;
I liv'd upon my Saviour's smiles,
And lean'd upon his arm.

4 In pray'r my soul drew near the Lord,
And saw his glory shine;
And when I read his holy word,
I call'd each promise mine.

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5 Then to his saints I often spoke
Of what his love had done;
But now my heart is almost broke,
For all my joys are gone.

6 Now when the ev'ning shade prevails,
My soul in darkness mourns;
And when the morn the light reveals,
No light to me returns.

7 My pray'rs are now a chatt'ring noise,
For Jesus hides his face;
I read, the promise meets my eyes,
But will not reach my case.

8 Now Satan threatens to prevail,
And make my soul his prey:
Yet, Lord, thy mercies cannot fail,
O come without delay!

XLIV. *The Change.**

1 SAVIOUR, shine and cheer my soul,
Bid my dying hopes revive;
Make my wounded spirit whole,
Far away the tempter drive;
Speak the word, and set me free,
Let me live alone to thee.

2 Shall I sigh and pray in vain,
Wilt thou still refuse to hear?
Wilt thou not return again,
Must I yield to black despair?
Thou hast taught my heart to pray,
Canst thou turn thy face away?

3 Once I thought my mountain strong,
Firmly fix'd no more to move;
Then thy grace was all my song,
Then my soul was fill'd with love;
Those were happy, golden days,
Sweetly spent in prayer and praise.

4 When my friends have said, "Beware,
"Soon or late you'll find a change,"
I could see no cause for fear,
Vain their caution seem'd, and strange;
Not a cloud obscur'd my sky,
Could I think a tempest nigh?

5 Little then myself I knew,
Little thought of Satan's pow'r:
Now I find their words were true,
Now I feel the stormy hour!
Sin has put my joys to flight,
Sin has chang'd my day to night.

* Book iii. Hymn 34. and Book iii. Hymn 86.

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6 Satan asks and mocks my wo,
" Boaster, where is now your God?"
Silence, Lord, this cruel foe,
Let him know I'm bought with blood:
Tell him, since I know thy name,
Though I change, thou art the same.

PSALMS.

XLV. *Pleading for mercy.* Psalm vi.

1 In mercy, not in wrath, rebuke
Thy feeble worm, my God!
My spirit dreads thine angry look,
And trembles at thy rod.

2 Have mercy, Lord, for I am weak,
Regard my heavy groans;
O let thy voice of comfort speak,
And heal my broken bones!

3 By day, my busy beating head
Is fill'd with anxious fears;
By night, upon my restless bed,
I weep a flood of tears.

4 Thus I sit desolate and mourn,
Mine eyes grow dull with grief:
How long, my Lord, ere thou return,
And bring my soul relief?

5 O come and show thy pow'r to save,
And spare my fainting breath;
For who can praise thee in the grave,
Or sing thy name in death?

6 Satan, my cruel, envious foe,
Insults me in my pain;
He smiles to see me brought so low,
And tells me hope is vain.

7 But hence, thou enemy, depart,
Nor tempt me to despair;
My Saviour comes to cheer my heart,
The Lord has heard my pray'r.

XLVI. *None upon earth I desire beside thee.* Psalm lxxiii. 25.

1 How tedious and tasteless the hours,
When Jesus no longer I see;
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flow'rs,
Have lost all their sweetness with me;
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay:
But when I am happy in him,
December's as pleasant as May.

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2 His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than Music his voice;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice:
I should, were he always thus nigh,
Having nothing to wish or to fear;
No mortal so happy as I,
My summer would last all the year.

3 Content with beholding his face,
My all to his pleasure resign'd,
No changes of season or place
Would make any change in my mind;
While bless'd with a sense of his love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

4 Dear Lord, if indeed I am thine,
If thou art my sun and my song;
Say, why do I languish and pine,
And why are my winters so long?
O drive these dark clouds from my sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me unto thee on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.

XLVII. *The Believer's Safety.* Psalm xci.

1 Incarnate God! the soul that knows
Thy name's mysterious pow'r,
Shall dwell in undisturb'd repose,
Nor fear the trying hour.

2 Thy wisdom, faithfulness, and love,
To feeble helpless worms,
A buckler and a refuge prove
From enemies and storms.

3 In vain the fowler spreads his net,
To draw them from thy care;
Thy timely call instructs their feet
To shun the artful snare.

4 When, like a baneful pestilence,
Sin mows its thousands down
On ev'ry side, without defence,
Thy grace secures thine own.

5 No midnight terrors haunt their bed;
No arrow wounds by day;
Unhurt on serpents they shall tread,
If found in duty's way.

6 Angels, unseen, attend the saints,
And bear them in their arms,
To cheer the spirit when it faints,
And guard the life from harms;

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7 The angels' Lord himself is nigh
To them that love his name;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame.

8 Crosses and changes are their lot
Long as they sojourn here:
But since their Saviour changes not,
What have the saints to fear?

XLVIII. *Another.*

1 THAT man no guard or weapons needs,
Whose heart the blood of Jesus knows;
But safe may pass, if duty leads,
Thro' burning sands or mountain-snows.

2 Releas'd from guilt, he feels no fear;
Redemption is his shield and tow'r;
He sees his Saviour always near
To help in ev'ry trying hour.

3 Though I am weak, and Satan strong,
And often to assault me tries;
When Jesus is my shield and song,
Abash'd the wolf before me flies.

4 His love possessing, I am blest,
Secure whatever change may come:
Whether I go to east or west,
With him I still shall be at home.

5 If plac'd beneath the northern pole,
Though winter reigns with rigour there;
His gracious beams would cheer my soul,
And make a spring throughout the year.

6 Or if the desert's sun-burnt soil
My lonely dwelling e're should prove;
His presence would support my toil,
Whose smile is life, whose voice is love.

XLIX. *He led them by a right way.* Psalm cvii. 7.

1 WHEN Israel was from Egypt freed,
The Lord, who brought them out,
Help'd them in ev'ry time of need,
But led them round about.*

2 To enter Canaan soon they hop'd;
But quickly chang'd their mind,
When the Red Sea their passage stopp'd,
And Pharaoh march'd behind.

* Exodus xiii. 17.

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3 The desert fill'd them with alarms,
For water and for food;
And Amalek, by force of arms,
To check their progress stood.

4 They often murmur'd by the way,
Because they judg'd by sight;
But were at length constrain'd to say,
The Lord had led them right.

5 In the Red Sea, that stopp'd them first,
Their enemies were drown'd;
The rocks gave water for their thirst,
And Manna spread the ground.

6 By fire and cloud their way was shown
Across the pathless sands;
And Amalek was overthrown
By Moses' lifted hands.

7 The way was right their hearts to prove,
To make God's glory known;
And show his wisdom, pow'r and love,
Engag'd to save his own.

8 Just so the true believer's path
Through many dangers lies;
Though dark to sense, 'tis right to faith,
And leads us to the skies.

L. *What shall I render?** Psalm cxvi. 12, 13.

1 For mercies, countless as the sands,
Which daily I receive
From Jesus my Redeemer's hands,
My soul, what canst thou give?

2 Alas! from such a heart as mine,
What can I bring him forth?
My best is stain'd and dy'd with sin,
My all is nothing worth.

3 Yet this acknowledgment I'll make
For all he has bestow'd,
Salvation's sacred cup I'll take,
And call upon my God.

4 The best returns for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
And ask him still for more.

5 I cannot serve him as I ought,
No works have I to boast;
Yet would I glory in the thought
That I shall owe him most.

* Book iii. Hymn 67.

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LI. *Dwelling in Mesech.* Psalm cxx. 5—7.

1 What a mournful life is mine,
Fill'd with crosses, pains, and cares!
Ev'ry work defil'd with sin,
Ev'ry step beset with snares!

2 If alone I pensive sit,
I myself can hardly bear;
If I pass along the street,
Sin and riot triumph there.

3 Jesus! how my heart is pain'd,
How it mourns for souls deceiv'd,
When I hear thy name profan'd,
When I see thy Spirit griev'd!

4 When thy children's griefs I view,
Their distress becomes my own;
All I hear, or see, or do,
Makes me tremble, weep, and groan.

5 Mourning thus I long had been,
When I heard my Saviour's voice;
"Thou hast cause to mourn for sin,
"But in me thou may'st rejoice."

6 This kind word dispell'd my grief,
Put to silence my complaints;
Though of sinners I am chief,
He has rank'd me with his saints.

7 Though constrain'd to dwell a while
Where the wicked strive and brawl;
Let them frown, so he but smile,
Heav'n will make amends for all.

8 There, believers, we shall rest,
Free from sorrow, sin, and fears;
Nothing there our peace molest,
Through eternal rounds of years.

9 Let us then the fight endure,
See our Captain looking down;
He will make the conquest sure,
And bestow the promis'd crown.

PROVERBS.

LII. C. *Wisdom.* Chap. viii. 22—31.

1 Ere God had built the mountains, or rais'd the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains that feed the running rills;
In me, from everlasting, the wonderful I AM,
Found pleasures never wasting, and Wisdom is my name.

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2 When like a tent to dwell in, he spread the skies abroad,
And swath'd about the swelling of ocean's mighty flood,
He wrought by weight and measure, and I was with him then;
Myself the Father's pleasure, and mine, the sons of men.

3 Thus wisdom's words discover thy glory and thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye survey'd us ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou hast made us, and died for us in love.

4 And couldst thou be delighted with creatures such as we,
Who, when we saw thee, slighted, and nail'd thee to the tree?
Unfathomable wonder, and mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder, says, "Sinner, I am thine!

LIII. *A Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.* Chap. xviii. 24.

1 One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end:
They who once his kindness prove
Find it everlasting love!

2 Which of all friends, to save us,
Could or would have shed their blood!
But our Jesus died to have us
Reconcil'd in him to God:
This was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a Friend in need.

3 Men, when rais'd to lofty stations,
Often know their friends no more;
Slight and scorn their poor relations,
Though they valu'd them before:
But our Saviour always owns
Those whom he redeem'd with groans.

4 When he liv'd on earth abas'd,
Friend of sinners was his name,
Now above all glory rais'd,
He rejoices in the same:
Still he calls them brethren, friends,
And to all their wants attends.

5 Could we bear from one another
What he daily bears from us?
Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
Loves us, though we treat him thus:
Though for good we render ill,
He accounts us brethren still.

6 Oh! for grace our hearts to soften!
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
We, alas! forget too often
What a Friend we have above:
But when home our souls are brought,
We will love thee as we ought.

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ECCLESIASTES.

LIV. *Vanity of Life.** Chap. i. 2.

1 The evils that beset our path
Who can prevent or cure?
We stand upon the brink of death
When most we seem secure.

2 If we to-day sweet peace possess,
It soon may be withdrawn;
Some change may plunge us in distress,
Before to-morrow's dawn.

3 Disease and pain invade our health,
And find an easy prey;
And oft, when least expected, wealth
Takes wings, and flies away.

4 A fever or a blow can shake
Our wisdom's boasted rule,
And of the brightest genius make
A madman or a fool.

5 The gourds, from which we look for fruit,
Produce us only pain;
A worm, unseen, attacks the root,
And all our hopes are vain.

6 I pity those who seek no more
Than such a world can give;
Wretched they are, and blind, and poor,
And dying while they live.

7 Since sin has fill'd the earth with wo,
And creatures fade and die,
Lord, wean our hearts from things below,
And fix our hopes on high.

LV. C. *Vanity of the World.*

1 God gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good;
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

2 The world's esteem is but a bribe,
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vain-glorious tribe,
Who hate you while they make you known.

3 The joy that vain amusements give,
O! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

* Book ii. Hymn 6.

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4 'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treach'rous smiles;
She leads them, blindfold, by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

5 God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless wo;
And with a long despairing groan
Blaspheme their Maker as they go.

6 O fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms,
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embrac'd in everlasting arms.

LVI. *Vanity of the Creature sanctified.*

1 Honey though the bee prepares,
An envenom'd sting he wears;
Piercing thorns a guard compose
Round the fragrant, blooming rose.

2 Where we think to find a sweet,
Oft a painful sting we meet:
When the rose invites our eye,
We forget the thorn is nigh.

3 Why are thus our hopes beguil'd?
Why are all our pleasures spoil'd?
Why do agony and wo
From our choicest comforts grow?

4 Sin has been the cause of all!
'Twas not thus before the fall!
What but pain, and thorn, and sting,
From the root of sin can spring?

5 Now with every good we find
Vanity and grief entwin'd:
What we feel, or what we fear,
All our joys embitter here.

6 Yet, through the Redeemer's love,
These afflictions blessings prove;
He the wounding stings and thorns
Into healing med'cines turns.

7 From the earth our hearts they wean.
Teach us on his arm to lean;
Urge us to a throne of grace,
Make us seek a resting place.

8 In the mansions of our King
Sweets abound without a sting;
Thornless there the roses blow,
And the joys unmingled flow.

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SOLOMON'S SONG.

LVII. *The name of Jesus.* Chap. i. 3.

1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It sooths his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis Manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

3 Dear name! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place;
My never-failing treas'ry, fill'd
With boundless stores of grace.

4 By thee my pray'rs acceptance gain,
Although with sin defil'd;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am own'd a child.

5 Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King;
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

6 Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought:
But when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought.

7 'Till then I would thy love proclaim
With ev'ry fleeting breath;
And may the music of thy name
Refresh my soul in death.

ISAIAH.

LVIII. C. *O Lord, I will praise thee.* Chap. xii.

1 I will praise thee ev'ry day,
Now thine anger's turn'd away!
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

2 Here, in the fair Gospel field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Streams of life, a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more.

3 Jesus is become, at length,
My salvation and my strength;
And his praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.

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4 Praise ye then his glorious name,
Publish his exalted fame!
Still his worth your praise exceeds,
Excellent are all his deeds.

5 Raise again the joyful sound,
Let the nations roll it round!
Zion shout, for this is he,
God the Saviour dwells in thee!

LIX. *The Refuge, River, and Rock of the Church.* Chap. xxxii. 2.

1 He who on earth as man was known,
And bore our sins and pains;
Now seated on th' eternal throne,
The God of glory reigns.

2 His hands the wheels of nature guide
With an unerring skill;
And countless worlds, extended wide,
Obey his sov'reign will.

3 While harps unnumber'd sound his praise
In yonder world above;
His saints on earth admire his ways,
And glory in his love.

4 His righteousness, to faith reveal'd,
Wrought out for guilty worms,
Affords a hiding-place and shield
From enemies and storms.

5 This land, through which his pilgrims go,
Is desolate and dry;
But streams of grace from him o'erflow,
Their thirst to satisfy.

6 When troubles, like a burning sun,
Beat heavy on their head,
To this almighty Rock they run,
And find a pleasing shade.

7 How glorious he! how happy they
In such a glorious Friend!
Whose love secures them all the way,
And crowns them at the end.

LX. *Zion, or the City of God.** Chap. xxxiii. 20, 21.

1 Glorious things of thee are spoken,†
Zion, city of our God!
He, whose word cannot be broken,
Form'd thee for his own abode:‡

* Book ii. Hymn 24. † Psalm lxxxvii. 3. ‡ Psalm cxxxii. 14.

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On the Rock of Ages founded,*
What can shake thy sure repose;
With salvation's walls surrounded,†
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

2 See the streams of living waters
Springing from eternal love,‡
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove:
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst t' assuage?
Grace, which like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age.

3 Round each habitation hov'ring,
See the cloud and fire appear!‖
For a glory and a cov'ring,
Showing that the Lord is near;
Thus deriving, from their banner,
Light by night and shade by day;
Safe they feed upon the Manna
Which he gives them when they pray.

4 Blest inhabitants of Zion,
Wash'd in the Redeemer's blood!
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
Makes them kings and priests to God:§
'Tis his love his people raises
Over self to reign as kings,
And as priests, his solemn praises
Each for a thank-off'ring brings.

5 Saviour, if of Zion's city
I, through grace, a member am;
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in thy name:
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

LXI. *Look unto me and be ye saved.* Chap. xlv. 22.

1 As the serpent rais'd by Moses¶
Heal'd the burning serpent's bite;
Jesus thus himself discloses
To the wounded sinner's sight:
Hear his gracious invitation,
"I have life and peace to give,
"I have wrought out full salvation,
"Sinner, look to me and live.

2 "Pore upon your sins no longer,
"Well I know their mighty guilt;
"But my love than death is stronger,
"I my blood have freely spilt:

* Matt. xvi. 18. † Isaiah xxvi. 1. ‡ Psalm xlvi. 4. ‖ Isa. iv. 5, 6.
§ Rev. i. 6. ¶ Numb. xxi. 9.

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"Tho' your heart has long been harden'd,
"Look on me—it soft shall grow;
"Past transgressions shall be pardon'd,
"And I'll wash you white as snow.

3 "I have seen what you were doing,
"Though you little thought of me;
"You were madly bent on ruin,
"But, I said—it shall not be:
"You had been for ever wretched,
"Had I not espous'd your part;
"Now behold my arms outstretched
"To receive you to my heart.

4 "Well may shame, and joy, and wonder,
"All your inward passions move;
"I could crush thee with my thunder,
"But I speak to thee in love:
"See! your sins are all forgiven,
"I have paid the countless sum!
"Now my death has open'd heaven,
"Thither you shall shortly come."

5 Dearest Saviour, we adore thee
For thy precious life and death;
Melt each stubborn heart before thee,
Give us all the eye of faith.
From the law's condemning sentence,
To thy mercy we appeal;
Thou alone canst give repentance,
Thou alone our souls canst heal.

LXII. *The good Physician.*

1 How lost was my condition till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one Physician can cure a sin-sick soul!
Next door to death he found me, and snatch'd me from the grave,
To tell to all around me his wond'rous power to save.

2 The worst of all diseases is light, compar'd with sin;
On ev'ry part it seizes, but rages most within:
'Tis palsy, plague, and fever, and madness—all combin'd;
And none but a believer the least relief can find.

3 From men great skill professing I thought a cure to gain;
But this prov'd more distressing, and added to my pain:
Some said that nothing ail'd me, some gave me up for lost;
Thus ev'ry refuge fail'd me, and all my hopes were cross'd.

4 At length this great Physician, how matchless is his grace!
Accepted my petition, and undertook my case:
First gave me sight to view him, for sin my eyes had seal'd;
Then bid me look unto him; I look'd, and I was heal'd.

5 A dying, risen Jesus, seen by the eye of faith,
At once from danger frees us, and saves the soul from death:
Come then to this Physician, his help he'll freely give,
He makes no hard condition, 'tis only—look and live.

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LXIII. *To the Afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.* Chap. liv. 5—11.

1 Pensive, doubting, fearful heart,
Hear what Christ the Saviour says;
Ev'ry word should joy impart,
Change thy mourning into praise:
Yes, he speaks, and speaks to thee,
May he help thee to believe!
Then thou presently wilt see
Thou hast little cause to grieve.

2 "Fear thou not, nor be asham'd,
"All thy sorrows soon shall end:
"I, who heav'n and earth have fram'd,
"Am thy husband and thy friend:
"I, the High, and Holy One,
"Israel's God, by all ador'd,
"As thy Saviour will be known,
"Thy Redeemer and thy Lord.

3 "For a moment I withdrew,
"And thy heart was fill'd with pain;
"But my mercies I'll renew,
"Thou shalt soon rejoice again:
"Though I seem to hide my face,
"Very soon my wrath shall cease;
"'Tis but for a moment's space,
"Ending in eternal peace.

4 "When my peaceful bow appears,*
"Painted on the wat'ry cloud;
"'Tis to dissipate thy fears,
"Lest the earth should be o'erflow'd:
"'Tis an emblem too of grace,
"Of my cov'nant love a sign:
"Though the mountains leave their place,
"Thou shalt be for ever mine.

5 "Though afflicted, tempest-toss'd,
"Comfortless awhile thou art,
"Do not think thou canst be lost,
"Thou art graven on my heart:
"All thy wastes I will repair,
"Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
"And in thee it shall appear
"What a God of love can do."

LXIV. C. *The Contrite Heart.* Chap. lvii. 15.

1 The Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

* Gen. ix. 13, 14.

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2 I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel.

3 I sometimes think myself inclin'd
To love thee if I could;
But often feel another mind,
Averse to all that's good.

4 My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, "My strength renew,"
Seem weaker than before.

5 Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love thy house of pray'r;
I therefore go where others go,
But find no comfort there.

6 O make this heart rejoice or ache:
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,
And heal it, if it be.

LXV. C. *The future Peace and Glory of the Church.* Chap. lx. 15—20.

1 HEAR what God the Lord hath spoken,
"O my people, faint and few,
"Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
"Fair abodes I build for you;
"Themes of heart-felt tribulation
"Shall no more perplex your ways;
"You shall name your walls Salvation,
"And your gates shall all be praise.

2 "There, like streams that feed the garden,
"Pleasures without end shall flow;
"For the Lord, your faith rewarding,
"All his bounty shall bestow;
"Still, in undisturb'd possession,
"Peace and righteousness shall reign;
"Never, shall you feel oppression,
"Hear the voice of war again.

3 "Ye no more your suns descending,
"Waning moons no more shall see;
"But, your griefs for ever ending,
"Find eternal noon in me;
"God shall rise, and shining o'er you,
"Change to day the gloom of night:
"He, the Lord, shall be your glory,
"God your everlasting light."

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JEREMIAH.

LXVI. *Trust of the Wicked and the Righteous compared.* Chap. xvii. 5—8.

1 As parched in the barren sands,
Beneath a burning sky,
The worthless bramble with'ring stands,
And only grows to die.

2 Such is the sinner's awful case,
Who makes the world his trust,
And dares his confidence to place
In vanity and dust.

3 A secret curse destroys his root,
And dries his moisture up;
He lives a while, but bears no fruit,
Then dies without a hope.

4 But happy he whose hopes depend
Upon the Lord alone;
The soul that trusts in such a Friend,
Can ne'er be overthrown.

5 Tho' gourds should wither, cisterns break,
And creature-comforts die,
No change his solid hope can shake,
Or stop his sure supply.

6 So thrives and blooms the tree whose roots
By constant streams are fed;
Array'd in green, and rich in fruits,
It rears its branching head.

7 It thrives though rain should be deny'd,
And drought around prevail;
'Tis planted by a river side,
Whose waters cannot fail.

LXVII. C. *Jehovah our Righteousness.* Chap. xxiii. 6.

1 My God, how perfect are thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

2 When I would speak what thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make thy mercies known
But self-applause creeps in.

3 Divine desire, that holy flame
Thy grace creates in me;
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to thee.

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4 This heart, a fountain of vile thoughts,
How does it overflow!
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

5 Let others in the gaudy dress
Of fancied merit shine,
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord for ever mine.

LXVIII. C. *Ephraim repenting.* Chap. xxxi. 18—20.

1 My God, till I receiv'd thy stroke,
How like a beast was I!
So unaccustom'd to the yoke,
So backward to comply.

2 With grief my just reproach I bear,
Shame fills me at the thought;
How frequent my rebellions were!
What wickedness I wrought!

3 Thy merciful restraint I scorn'd,
And left the pleasant road;
Yet turn me, and I shall be turn'd,
Thou art the Lord my God.

4 "Is Ephraim banish'd from my thoughts,
"Or vile in my esteem?
"No," saith the Lord, "with all his faults
"I still remember him.

5 "Is he a dear and pleasant child?
"Yes, dear and pleasant still;
"Though sin his foolish heart beguil'd,
"And he withstood my will.

6 "My sharp rebuke has laid him low,
"He seeks my face again;
"My pity kindles at his wo,
"He shall not seek in vain."

LAMENTATIONS.

LXIX. *The Lord is my portion.* Chap. iii. 24.

1 From pole to pole let others roam,
And search in vain for bliss;
My soul is satisfied at home,
The Lord my portion is.

2 Jesus, who on his glorious throne
Rules heav'n, and earth, and sea,
Is pleas'd to claim me for his own,
And give himself to me.

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3 His person fixes all my love,
His blood removes my fear;
And while he pleads for me above,
His arm preserves me here.

4 His word of promise is my food,
His Spirit is my guide;
Thus daily is my strength renew'd,
And all my wants supply'd.*

5 For him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace, for him, renown;
Well may I glory in his cross,
While he prepares my crown!

6 Let worldlings then indulge their boast,
How much they gain or spend;
Their joys must soon give up the ghost,
But mine shall know no end.

EZEKIEL.

LXX. *Humbled and silenced by Mercy.* Chap. xvi. 63.

1 Once perishing in blood I lay,
Creatures no help could give;
But Jesus pass'd me in the way,
He saw, and bid me live.

2 Though Satan still his rule maintain'd,
And all his arts employ'd;
That mighty word his rage restrain'd,
I could not be destroy'd.

3 At length the time of love arriv'd
When I my Lord should know;
Then Satan, of his pow'r depriv'd,
Was forc'd to let me go.

4 O can I e'er that day forget,
When Jesus kindly spoke!
"Poor soul, my blood has paid thy debt,
"And now I break thy yoke.

5 "Henceforth I take thee for my own,
"And give myself to thee;
"Forsake the idols thou hast known,
"And yield thyself to me."

6 Ah, worthless heart! it promis'd fair,
And said it would be thine;
I little thought it e'er would dare
Again with idols join.

7 Lord, dost thou such backslidings heal,
And pardon all that's past?
Sure, if I am not made of steel,
Thou hast prevail'd at last.

* Book iii. Hymn 59.

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3 My tongue, which rashly spoke before,
This mercy will restrain;
Surely I now shall boast no more,
Nor censure, nor complain.

LXXI. C. *The Covenant.* Chap. xxxvi. 25—28.

1 The Lord proclaims his grace abroad!
Behold, I change your hearts of stone;
Each shall renounce his idol-god,
And serve, henceforth, the Lord alone.

2 My grace, a flowing stream, proceeds
To wash your filthiness away;
Ye shall abhor your former deeds,
And learn my statutes to obey.

3 My truth the great design ensures,
I give myself away to you;
You shall be mine, I will be yours,
Your God unalterably true.

4 Yet not unsought or unimplor'd,
The plenteous grace shall I confer;*
No—your whole hearts shall seek the Lord,
I'll put a praying spirit there.

5 From the first breath of life divine,
Down to the last expiring hour,
The gracious work shall all be mine,
Begun and ended in my pow'r.

LXXII. C. *Jehovah-Shammah.* Chap. xlviii. 35.

1 As birds their infant brood protect,†
And spread their wings to shelter them,
Thus saith the Lord to his elect,
"So will I guard Jerusalem."

2 And what then is Jerusalem,
This darling object of his care?
Where is its worth in God's esteem?
Who built it? who inhabits there?

3 Jehovah founded it in blood,
The blood of his incarnate Son;
There dwell the saints, once foes to God,
The sinners whom he calls his own.

4 There, though besieg'd on ev'ry side,
Yet much belov'd and guarded well,
From age to age they have defy'd
The utmost force of earth and hell.

5 Let earth repeat, and hell despair,
This city has a sure defence;
Her name is call'd, the Lord is there,
And who has pow'r to drive him thence?

* Ver. 37. † Isaiah xxxi. 5.

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DANIEL.

LXXIII. *The Power and Triumph of Faith.* Chap. iii. 6.

1 Supported by the word, though in himself a worm,
The servant of the Lord can wond'rous acts perform:
Without dismay he boldly treads
Where'er the path of duty leads.

2 The haughty king, in vain, with fury on his brow,
Believers would constrain to golden gods to bow;
The furnace could not make them fear,
Because they knew the Lord was near.

3 As vain was the decree which charg'd them not to pray;
Daniel still bow'd his knee, and worshipp'd thrice a day.
Trusting in God, he fear'd not men,
Though threaten'd with the lions' den.

4 Secure they might refuse compliance with such laws;
For what had they to lose, when God espous'd their cause?
He made the hungry lions crouch;
Nor durst the fire his children touch.

5 The Lord is still the same, a mighty shield and tow'r,
And they who trust his name are guarded by his pow'r:
He can the rage of lions tame,
And bear them harmless through the flame.

6 Yet we too often shrink when trials are in view;
Expecting we must sink and never can get through:
But could we once believe indeed,
From all these fears we should be freed.

LXXIV. *Belshazzar.* Chap. v. 5, 6.

1 Poor sinners! little do they think
With whom they have to do!
But stand securely on the brink
Of everlasting wo.

2 Belshazzar, thus profanely bold
The Lord of hosts defy'd;
But vengeance soon his boasts controll'd,
And humbled all his pride.

3 He saw a hand upon the wall,
(And trembled on his throne,)
Which wrote his sudden, dreadful fall
In characters unknown.

4 Why should he tremble at the view
Of what he could not read?
Foreboding conscience quickly knew
His ruin was decreed.

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5 See him o'erwhelm'd with deep distress!
His eyes with anguish roll;
His looks and loosen'd joints express
The terrors of his soul.

6 His pomp and music, guests and wine,
No more delight afford;
Oh, sinner! ere this case be thine,
Begin to seek the Lord.

7 The law, like this hand-writing, stands,
And speaks the wrath of God;*
But Jesus answers its demands,
And cancels it with blood.

JONAH.

LXXV. *The Gourd.* Chap. iv. 7.

1 As once for Jonah, so the Lord,
To sooth and cheer my mournful hours,
Prepar'd for me a pleasing gourd;
Cool was its shade and sweet its flow'rs.

2 To prize his gift was surely right,
But through the folly of my heart,
I hid the Giver from my sight,
And soon my joy was chang'd to smart.

3 While I admir'd its beauteous form,
Its pleasant shade and grateful fruit;
The Lord, displeas'd, sent forth a worm,
Unseen, to prey upon the root.

4 I trembled when I saw it fade,
But guilt restrain'd the murm'ring word;
My folly I confess'd, and pray'd,
Forgive my sin, and spare my gourd.

5 His wond'rous love can ne'er be told,
He heard me, and reliev'd my pain;
His word the threat'ning worm controll'd
And bid my gourd revive again.

6 Now, Lord, my gourd is mine no more,
'Tis thine, who only couldst it raise;
The idol of my heart before
Henceforth shall flourish to thy praise.

ZECHARIAH.

LXXVI. *Prayer for the Lord's promised Presence.* Chap. ii. 10.

1 Son of God, thy people shield!
Must we still thine absence mourn?
Let thy promise be fulfill'd,
Thou hast said, "I will return."

* Col. ii. 14.

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2 Gracious Leader, now appear,
Shine upon us with thy light!
Like the spring, when thou art near,
Days and suns are doubly bright.

3 As a mother counts the days
Till her absent son she see,
Longs and watches, weeps and prays,
So our spirits long for thee.

4 Come, and let us feel thee nigh,
Then thy sheep shall feed in peace;
Plenty bless us from on high,
Evil from amongst us cease.

5 With thy love, and voice, and aid,
Thou canst ev'ry care assuage;
Then we shall not be afraid,
Though the world and Satan rage.

6 Thus each day for thee we'll spend,
While our callings we pursue;
And the thoughts of such a Friend
Shall each night our joy renew.

7 Let thy light be ne'er withdrawn,
Golden days afford us long!
Thus we pray at early dawn,
This shall be our ev'ning song.

LXXVII. *A Brand plucked out of the Fire.* Chap. iii. 1—5.

1 With Satan, my accuser, near,
My spirit trembled when I saw
The Lord in majesty appear,
And heard the language of his law.

2 In vain I wish'd and strove to hide
The tatter'd, filthy rags I wore;
While my fierce foe insulting cry'd,
"See what you trusted in before!"

3 Struck dumb, and left without a plea,
I heard my gracious Saviour say,
"Know, Satan, I this sinner free,
"I died to take his sins away.

4 "This is a brand which I, in love,
"To save from wrath and sin design!
"In vain thy accusations prove;
"I answer all, and claim him mine."

5 At his rebuke the tempter fled;
Then he remov'd my filthy dress;
"Poor sinner, take this robe," he said,
"It is thy Saviour's righteousness.

6 "And see, a crown of life prepar'd!
"That I might thus my head adorn;
"I thought no shame or suff'ring hard,
"But wore for thee a crown of thorn."

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7 O how I heard these gracious words!
They broke and heal'd my heart at once;
Constrain'd me to become the Lord's,
And all my idol-gods renounce.

8 Now, Satan, thou hast lost thy aim,
Against this brand thy threats are vain;
Jesus has pluck'd it from the flame,
And who shall put it in again?

LXXVIII. *On one stone shall be seven Eyes.* Chap. iii. 9.

1 JESUS CHRIST, the Lord's anointed,
Who his blood for sinners spilt,
Is the stone by God appointed,
And the church is on him built:
He delivers all who trust him, from their guilt.

2 Many eyes at once are fixed
On a person so divine;
Love, with awful justice mixed,
In this great redemption shine:
Mighty Jesus! give me leave to call thee mine.

3 By the Father's eye approved,
Lo, a voice is heard from heav'n:*
"Sinners, this is my beloved,
"For your ransom freely given:
"All offences, for his sake, shall be forgiven."

4 Angels with their eyes pursu'd him,†
When he left his glorious throne;
With astonishment they view'd him
Put the form of servant on:
Angels worshipp'd him who was on earth unknown.

5 Satan and his host, amazed,
Saw this stone in Zion laid;
Jesus, though to death abased,
Bruis'd the subtle serpent's head,‡
When, to save us, on the cross his blood he shed.

6 When a guilty sinner sees him,
While he looks, his soul is heal'd;
Soon this sight from anguish frees him,
And imparts a pardon seal'd:§
May this Saviour be to all our hearts reveal'd.

7 With desire and admiration,
All his blood-bought flocks behold;
Him who wrought out their salvation,
And enclos'd them in his fold:‖
Yet their warmest love and praises are too cold.

8 By the eye of carnal reason
Many view him with disdain;¶
How will they abide the season
When he'll come with all his train?
To escape him then they'll wish, but wish in vain.

* Matt. iii. 17. † 1 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ John xii. 31. § John iii. 15. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 7. ¶ Ps. cxviii. 22.

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9 How their hearts will melt and tremble
When they hear his awful voice;*
But his saints he'll then assemble,
As his portion and his choice,
And receive them to his everlasting joys.

LXXIX. C. *Praise for the Fountain opened.* Chap. xiii. 1.

1 THERE is a fountain fill'd with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

2 The dying thief rejoic'd to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

3 Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r,
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be sav'd, to sin no more.

4 E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

5 Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy pow'r to save;
When this poor lisping, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

6 Lord, I believe thou hast prepar'd
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

7 'Tis strung and tun'd, for endless years,
And form'd by pow'r divine;
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other name but thine.

MALACHI.

LXXX. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord.* Chap. iii. 16—18.

1 WHEN sinners utter boasting words,
And glory in their shame;
The Lord, well pleas'd, an ear affords
To those who fear his name.

2 They often meet to seek his face,
And what they do, or say,
Is noted in his book of grace
Against another day.

* Rev. i. 7.

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3 For they, by faith, a day descry,
And joyfully expect,
When he, descending from the sky,
His jewels will collect.

4 Unnotic'd now, because unknown,
A poor and suff'ring few;
He comes to claim them for his own,
And bring them forth to view.

5 With transport then their Saviour's care
And favour they shall prove;
As tender parents guard and spare
The children of their love.

6 Assembled worlds will then discern
The saints alone are blest;
When wrath shall like an oven burn,
And vengeance strike the rest.

MATTHEW.

LXXXI. *The Beggar.* Chap. vii. 7, 8.

1 Encourag'd by thy word of promise to the poor,
Behold a beggar, Lord, waits at thy mercy's door!
No hand, no heart, O Lord, but thine,
Can help or pity wants like mine.

2 The beggar's usual plea, relief from men to gain,
If offer'd unto thee, I know thou wouldst disdain;
And pleas which move thy gracious ear
Are such as men would scorn to hear.

3 I have no right to say, that though I now am poor,
Yet once there was a day when I possessed more;
Thou know'st that from my very birth,
I've been the poorest wretch on earth.

4 Nor can I dare profess, as beggars often do,
Though great is my distress, my wants have been but few:
If thou shouldst leave my soul to starve,
It would be what I well deserve.

5 'Twere folly to pretend I never begg'd before;
Or if thou now befriend, I'll trouble thee no more;
Thou often hast reliev'd my pain,
And often I must come again.

6 Though crumbs are much too good for such a dog as I,
No less than children's food my soul can satisfy;
O do not frown and bid me go,
I must have all thou canst bestow.

7 Nor can I willing be thy bounty to conceal
From others, who, like me, their wants and hunger feel;
I'll tell them of thy mercy's store,
And try to send a thousand more.

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8 Thy thoughts, thou only wise! our thoughts and ways transcend,
Far as the arched skies above the earth extend:*
Such pleas as mine men would not bear,
But God receives a beggar's pray'r.

LXXXII. *The Leper.* Chap. viii. 2, 3.

1 Oft as the leper's case I read,
My own describ'd I feel;
Sin is a leprosy indeed,
Which none but Christ can heal.

2 Awhile I would have pass'd for well,
And strove my spots to hide;
Till it broke out incurable,
Too plain to be deny'd.

3 Then from the saints I sought to flee,
And dreaded to be seen;
I thought they all would point at me,
And cry, "Unclean, unclean!"

4 What anguish did my soul endure,
Till hope and patience ceas'd!
The more I strove myself to cure,
The more the plague increas'd,

5 While thus I lay distress'd, I saw
The Saviour passing by;
To him, though fill'd with shame and awe,
I rais'd my mournful cry.

6 Lord, thou canst heal me if thou wilt,
For thou canst all things do;
O cleanse my leprous soul from guilt,
My filthy heart renew!

7 He heard, and with a gracious look
Pronounc'd the healing word;
"I will—be clean," and while he spoke
I felt my health restor'd.

8 Come, lepers, seize the present hour,
The Saviour's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for he is pow'r,
He will for he is love.

LXXXIII. *A sick Soul.* Chap. ix. 12.

1 Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To thee I bring my case,
My raging malady control,
And heal me by thy grace.

2 Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine;
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but thine.

* Isa. lv. 8, 9.

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5 I would disclose my whole complaint,
But where shall I begin?
No words of mine can fully paint
That worst distemper, sin.

4 It lies not in a single part,
But through my frame is spread:
A burning fever in my heart,
A palsy in my head.

5 It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind,
And impotent, and lame;
And overclouds, and fills my mind
With folly, fear, and shame.

6 A thousand evil thoughts intrude
Tumultuous in my breast;
Which indispose me for my food,
And rob me of my rest.

7 Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free:
Say, canst thou let a sinner die,
Who longs to live to thee?

LXXXIV. *Satan Returning.* Chap. xii. 43—45.

1 When Jesus claims the sinner's heart,
Where Satan rul'd before,
The evil spirit must depart,
And dares return no more.

2 But when he goes without constraint,
And wanders from his home,
Although withdrawn, 'tis but a feint,
He means again to come.

3 Some outward change perhaps is seen,
If Satan quit the place;
But though the house seem swept and clean,
'Tis destitute of grace.

4 Except the Saviour dwell and reign
Within the sinner's mind,
Satan, when he returns again,
Will easy entrance find.

5 With rage and malice sevenfold,
He then resumes his sway;
No more by checks to be controll'd,
No more to go away.

6 The sinner's former state was bad
But worse the latter far;
He lives possessed, blind, and mad,
And dies in dark despair.

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7 Lord, save me from this dreadful end!
And from this heart of mine,
O drive and keep away the fiend
Who fears no voice but thine.

LXXXV. C. *The Sower.* Chap. xiii. 3.

1 Ye sons of earth, prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow ground!
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

2 The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade;
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.

3 The thorny ground is sure to balk
All hopes of harvest there:
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

4 The beaten path and highway side
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

5 But where the Lord of grace and pow'r
Has bless'd the happy field;
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield!

6 Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace;
Let the same hand that gives the seed
Provide a fruitful place.

LXXXVI. *The Wheat and Tares.* Chap. xiii. 37—42.

1 Though in the outward church below
The wheat and tares together grow,
Jesus, ere long, will weed the crop,
And pluck the tares, in anger, up.

2 Will it relieve their horrors there,
To recollect their stations here?
How much they heard, how much they knew,
How long amongst the wheat they grew?

3 Oh! this will aggravate their case!
They perish'd under means of grace;
To them the word of life and faith
Became an instrument of death.

4 We seem alike when thus we meet,
Strangers might think we all are wheat;
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,
Each heart appears without disguise.

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5 The tares are spar'd for various ends;
Some for the sake of praying friends;
Others, the Lord, against their will,
Employs his counsels to fulfil.

6 But though they grow so tall and strong,
His plan will not require them long;
In harvest, when he saves his own,
The tares shall into hell be thrown.

LXXXVII. *Peter walking upon the Water.* Chap. xiv. 22—31.

1 A WORD from Jesus calms the sea,
The stormy wind controls,
And gives repose and liberty
To tempest-tossed souls.

2 To Peter on the waves he came,
And gave him instant peace;
Thus he to me reveal'd his name,
And bid my sorrows cease.

3 Then fill'd with wonder, joy, and love,
Peter's request was mine;
"Lord, call me down, I long to prove
"That I am wholly thine.

4 "Unmov'd at all I have to meet
"On life's tempestuous sea,
"Hard shall be easy, bitter sweet,
"So I may follow thee."

5 He heard and smil'd, and bid me try;
I eagerly obey'd;
But when from him I turn'd my eye,
How was my soul dismay'd!

6 The storm increas'd on ev'ry side,
I felt my spirit shrink:
And soon, with Peter, loud I cry'd,
"Lord, save me, or I sink."

7 Kindly he caught me by the hand,
And said, "Why dost thou fear,
"Since thou art come at my command,
"And I am always near?

8 "Upon my promise rest thy hope,
"And keep my love in view;
"I stand engag'd to hold thee up,
"And guide thee safely through."

LXXXVIII. *Woman of Canaan.* Chap. xv. 22—28.

1 PRAY'R an answer will obtain,
Though the Lord awhile delay;
None shall seek his face in vain,
None be empty sent away.

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When the woman came from Tyre,
And for help to Jesus sought,
Though he granted her desire,
Yet at first he answer'd not.

2 Could she guess at his intent,
When he to his foll'wers said,
"I to Israel's sheep am sent,
"Dogs must not have children's bread."
She was not of Israel's seed,
But of Canaan's wretched race;
Thought herself a dog indeed:
Was not this a hopeless case?

3 Yet although from Canaan sprung,
Though a dog herself she styl'd,
She had Israel's faith and tongue,
And was own'd for Abr'ham's child.
From his words she draws a plea:
"Though unworthy children's bread,
"'Tis enough for one like me,
"If with crumbs I may be fed."

4 Jesus then his heart reveal'd:
"Woman, canst thou thus believe?
"I to thy petition yield;
"All that thou canst wish, receive."
'Tis a pattern set for us,
How we ought to wait and pray;
None who plead and wrestle thus,
Shall be empty sent away.

LXXXIX. *What think ye of Christ?* Chap. xxii. 42.

1 WHAT think you of Christ? is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As he is beloved or not;
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath are your lot.

2 Some take him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most:
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in his blood,
Nor on his protection rely,
Unless I were sure he is God.

3 Some call him Saviour, in word,
But mix their own works with his plan;
And hope he his help will afford,
When they have done all that they can:

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If doings prove rather too light,
(A little, they own, they may fail,)
They purpose to make up full weight
By casting his name in the scale.

4 Some style him the pearl of great price,
And say he's the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys:
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And while they salute him, betray;
Ah! what will profession like this
Avail in his terrible day?

5 If ask'd, what of Jesus I think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, he's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my All.

XC. *The foolish Virgins.** Chap. xxv. 1.

1 When, descending from the sky,
The Bridegroom shall appear,
And the solemn midnight cry
Shall call professors near,
How the sound our hearts will damp!
How will shame o'erspread each face!
If we only have a lamp,
Without the oil of grace.

2 Foolish virgins then will wake,
And seek for a supply;
But in vain the pains they take
To borrow or to buy:
Then with those they now despise,
Earnestly they'll wish to share:
But the best among the wise
Will have no oil to spare.

3 Wise are they, and truly blest,
Who then shall ready be!
But despair will seize the rest,
And dreadful misery:
Once, they'll cry, we scorn'd to doubt,
Though in lies our trust we put;
Now our lamp of hope is out,
The door of mercy shut.

4 If they then presume to plead,
"Lord, open to us now;
"We on earth have heard and pray'd,
"And with thy saints did bow;"

* Book iii. Hymn 72.

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He will answer from his throne,
"Though you with my people mix'd,
"Yet to me you ne'er were known;
"Depart, your doom is fix'd."

5 O that none who worship here
May hear that word, "Depart!"
Lord, impress a godly fear
On each professor's heart;
Help us, Lord, to search the camp,
Let us not ourselves beguile!
Trusting to a dying lamp,
Without a stock of oil.

XCI. *Peter sinning and repenting.* Chap. xxvi. 75.

1 When Peter boasted, soon he fell,
Yet was by grace restor'd;
His case should be regarded well
By all who fear the Lord.

2 A voice it has, and helping hand,
Backsliders to recall;
And cautions those who think they stand,
Lest suddenly they fall.

3 He said, "Whatever others do,
"With Jesus I'll abide;"
Yet soon, amidst a murd'rous crew,
His suff'ring Lord deny'd.

4 He who had been so bold before,
Now trembled like a leaf;
Not only lied, but curs'd and swore,
To gain the more belief.

5 While he blasphem'd he heard the cock,
And Jesus look'd in love;
At once, as if by lightning struck,
His tongue forbore to move.

6 Deliver'd thus from Satan's snare,
He starts, as from a sleep;
His Saviour's look he could not bear,
But hasted forth to weep.

7 But sure the faithful cock had crow'd
A hundred times in vain,
Had not the Lord that look bestow'd
The meaning to explain.

8 As I, like Peter, vows had made,
Yet acted Peter's part;
So conscience, like the cock, upbraids
My base, ungrateful heart.

9 Lord Jesus, hear a sinner's cry,
My broken peace renew;
And grant one pitying look, that I
May weep with Peter too.

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MARK.

XCII. *The Legion dispossessed.* Chap. v. 18, 19.

1 Legion was my name by nature,
Satan rag'd within my breast;
Never misery was greater,
Never sinner more possessed:
Mischievous to all around me,
To myself the greatest foe:
Thus I was when Jesus found me.
Fill'd with madness, sin, and wo.

2 Yet in this forlorn condition,
When he came to set me free,
I reply'd to my Physician,
"What have I to do with thee?"
But he would not be prevented,
Rescu'd me against my will;
Had he staid till I consented,
I had been a captive still.

3 "Satan, though thou fain wouldst have it,
"Know, this soul is none of thine;
"I have shed my blood to save it,
"Now I challenge it for mine:*
"Though it long has thee resembled,
"Henceforth it shall me obey:"
Thus he spoke, while Satan trembled,
Gnash'd his teeth, and fled away.

4 Thus my frantic soul he healed,
Bid my sins and sorrows cease;
"Take," said he, "my pardon sealed,
"I have sav'd thee, go in peace."
Rather take me, Lord, to heaven,
Now thy love and grace I know;
Since thou hast my sins forgiven,
Why should I remain below?

5 "Love," he said, "will sweeten labours,
"Thou hast something yet to do;
"Go and tell your friends and neighbours
"What my love has done for you:
"Live to manifest my glory,
"Wait for heaven a little space;
"Sinners, when they hear thy story,
"Will repent, and seek my face."

XCIII. *The Ruler's Daughter raised.* Chap. v. 39—42.

1 Could the creatures help or ease us,
Seldom should we think of pray'r;
Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduc'd to self-despair:

* Book iii. Hymn 54.

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Long we either slight or doubt him;
But when all the means we try
Prove we cannot do without him,
Then at last to him we cry.

2 Thus the ruler, when his daughter *
Suffer'd much, though Christ was nigh,
Still deferr'd it, till he thought her
At the very point to die;
Though he mourn'd for her condition,
He did not entreat the Lord,
Till he found that no physician
But Himself could help afford.

3 Jesus did not once upbraid him,
That he had no sooner come;
But a gracious answer made him,
And went straightway with him home:
Yet his faith was put to trial
When his servants came, and said,
"Though he gave thee no denial,
"'Tis too late, the child is dead."

4 Jesus, to prevent his grieving,
Kindly spoke and eas'd his pain;
"Be not fearful, but believing,
"Thou shalt see her live again."
When he found the people weeping,
"Cease," he said, "no longer mourn
"For she is not dead, but sleeping;"
Then they laughed him to scorn.

5 O thou meek and lowly Saviour,
How determin'd is thy love!
Not this rude, unkind behaviour,
Could thy gracious purpose move:
Soon as he the room had enter'd,
Spoke, and took her by the hand,
Death at once his prey surrender'd,
And she liv'd at his command.

6 Fear not then, distress'd believer,
Venture on his mighty name;
He is able to deliver,
And his love is still the same;
Can his pity or his power
Suffer thee to pray in vain?
Wait but his appointed hour,
And thy suit thou shalt obtain.

XCIV. *But one Loaf.** Chap. viii. 14.

1 When the disciples cross'd the lake
With but one loaf on board,
How strangely did their hearts mistake
The caution of their Lord.

* Book iii. Hymn 57.

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2 "The leaven of the Pharisees
"Beware" the Saviour said;
They thought, it is because he sees
We have forgotten bread.

3 It seems they had forgotten too
What their own eyes had view'd;
How with what scarce suffic'd for few,
He fed a multitude.

4 If five small loaves, by his command,
Could many thousands serve;
Might not they trust his gracious hand,
That they should never starve?

5 They oft his pow'r and love had known,
And doubtless were to blame;
But we have reason good to own
That we are just the same.

6 How often has he brought relief,
And ev'ry want supply'd!
Yet soon, again, our unbelief
Says, "Can the Lord provide?"

7 Be thankful for one loaf to-day,
Though that be all your store;
To-morrow, if you trust and pray,
Shall timely bring you more.

XCV. *Bartimeus.* Chap. x. 47, 48.

1 "MERCY, O thou Son of David!"
Thus blind Bartimeus pray'd;
"Others by thy word are saved,
"Now to me afford thine aid."
Many for his crying chid him,
But he call'd the louder still;
Till the gracious Saviour bid him
"Come, and ask me what you will."

2 Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging us'd to live;
But he ask'd, and Jesus granted,
Alms which none but he could give:
"Lord, remove this grievous blindness,
"Let my eyes behold the day;"
Straight he saw, and, won by kindness,
Follow'd Jesus in the way.

3 Oh! methinks I hear him praising,
Publishing to all around,
"Friends, is not my case amazing?
"What a Saviour I have found!
"Oh! that all the blind but knew him,
"And would be advis'd by me!
"Surely, they would hasten to him,
"He would cause them all to see."

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XCVI. C. *The House of Prayer.* Chap. xi. 17.

1 THY mansion is the Christian's heart,
O Lord, thy dwelling-place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

2 Devoted as it is to thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place;
They steal away my joys from me,
And rob my Saviour of his praise.

3 There too a sharp designing trade,
Sin, Satan, and the world maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade,
To part with ease and purchase pain.

4 I know them, and I hate their din,
Am weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve thee as I would.

5 Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when thou art here!
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm, delightful house of pray'r.

6 And if thou make thy temple shine,
Yet, self-abas'd, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine,
I give thee what was thine before.

XCVII. *The blasted Fig-tree.* Chap. xi. 20.

1 ONE awful word which Jesus spoke
Against the tree which bore no fruit,
More piercing than the lightning's stroke,
Blasted and dry'd it to the root.

2 But could a tree the Lord offend,
To make him show his anger thus?
He surely had a further end,
To be a warning word to us.

3 The fig-tree by its leaves was known;
But having not a fig to show,
It brought a heavy sentence down,
"Let none hereafter on thee grow."

4 Too many, who the Gospel hear,
Whom Satan blinds and sin deceives,
We to this fig-tree may compare,
They yield no fruit, but only leaves.

5 Knowledge, and zeal, and gifts, and talk,
Unless combin'd with faith and love,
And witness'd by a Gospel-walk,
Will not a true profession prove.

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6 Without the fruit the Lord expects,
Knowledge will make our state the worse:
The barren trees he still rejects,
And soon will blast them with his curse.

7 O Lord, unite our hearts in pray'r!
On each of us thy Spirit send,
That we the fruits of grace may bear,
And find acceptance in the end.

LUKE.

XCVIII. *The two Debtors.* Chap. vii. 47.

1 Once a woman silent stood
While Jesus sat at meat;
From her eyes she pour'd a flood,
To wash his sacred feet;
Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd her mind,
That she e'er so vile could prove,
Yet now forgiveness find.

2 "How came this vile woman here?
"Will Jesus notice such?
"Sure, if he a prophet were,
"He would disdain her touch!"
Simon thus, with scornful heart,
Slighted one whom Jesus lov'd;
But her Saviour took her part,
And thus his pride reprov'd:

3 "If two men in debt were bound,
"One less, the other more,
"Fifty, or five hundred pound,
"And both alike were poor;
"Should the lender both forgive,
"When he saw them both distress'd,
"Which of them would you believe
"Engag'd to love him best?"

4 "Surely he who most did owe,"
The Pharisee reply'd:
Then our Lord, "By judging so,
"Thou dost for her decide.
"Simon, if, like her, you knew
"How much you forgiveness need;
"You like her had acted too,
"And welcom'd me indeed.

5 "When the load of sin is felt,
"And much forgiveness known,
"Then the heart of course will melt,
"Though hard before as stone:
"Blame not then her love and tears,
"Greatly she in debt has been;
"But I have remov'd her fears,
"And pardon'd all her sin."

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6 When I read this woman's case,
Her love and humble zeal,
I confess, with shame of face,
My heart is made of steel:
Much has been forgiven me,
Jesus paid my heavy score;
What a creature must I be,
That I can love no more!

XCIX. *The good Samaritan.* Chap. x. 33—35.

1 How kind the good Samaritan
To him who fell among the thieves!
Thus Jesus pities fallen man,
And heals the wounds the soul receives.

2 Oh! I remember well the day,
When sorely wounded, nearly slain,
Like that poor man I bleeding lay,
And groan'd for help, but groan'd in vain.

3 Men saw me in this helpless case,
And pass'd, without compassion, by;
Each neighbour turn'd away his face,
Unmoved by my mournful cry.

4 But he whose name had been my scorn,
(As Jews Samaritans despise,)
Came, when he saw me thus forlorn,
With love and pity in his eyes.

5 Gently he rais'd me from the ground,
Press'd me to lean upon his arm,
And into ev'ry gaping wound
He pour'd his own all-healing balm.

6 Unto his church my steps he led,
The house prepar'd for sinners lost,
Gave charge I should be cloth'd and fed,
And took upon him all the cost.

7 Thus sav'd from death, from want secur'd,
I wait till he again shall come,
(When I shall be completely cur'd,)
And take me to his heav'nly home.

8 There, through eternal, boundless days,
When nature's wheel no longer rolls,
How shall I love, adore, and praise,
This good Samaritan to souls!

C. *Martha and Mary.* Chap. x. 38—42.

1 MARTHA her love and joy express'd
By care to entertain her guest;
While Mary sat to hear her Lord,
And could not bear to lose a word.

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2 The principle, in both the same,
Produc'd in each a diff'rent aim;
The one to feast the Lord was led,
The other waited to be fed.

3 But Mary chose the better part,
Her Saviour's words refresh'd her heart;
While busy Martha angry grew,
And lost her time and temper too.

4 With warmth she to her sister spoke,
But brought upon herself rebuke;
"One thing is needful, and but one,
"Why do thy thoughts on many run?"

5 How oft are we like Martha vex'd,
Encumber'd, hurri'd, and perplex'd?
While trifles so engross our thought,
The one thing needful is forgot.

6 Lord, teach us this one thing to choose,
Which they who gain can never lose;
Sufficient in itself alone,
And needful were the world our own.

7 Let grov'ling hearts the world admire,
Thy love is all that I require!
Gladly I may the rest resign,
If the one needful thing be mine!

CI. *The Heart taken.* Chap. xi. 21, 22.

1 The castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well in every part
By him who dwells within.

2 For Satan there in arms resides,
And calls the place his own;
With care against assaults provides,
And rules as on a throne.

3 Each traitor thought on him, as chief,
In blind obedience waits;
And pride, self-will, and unbelief,
Are posted at the gates.

4 Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

5 But Jesus, stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour
Appears, to set his people free
From the usurper's pow'r.

6 "This heart I bought with blood," he says,
"And now it shall be mine;"
His voice the strong one arm'd dismays,
He knows he must resign.

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7 In spite of unbelief and pride,
And self, and Satan's art,
The gates of brass fly open wide,
And Jesus wins the heart.

8 The rebel soul that once withstood
The Saviour's kindest call,
Rejoices now, by grace subdu'd,
To serve him with her all.

CII. *The Worldling.* Chap. xii. 16—21.

1 "My barns are full, my stores increase,
"And now for many years,
"Soul, eat and drink, and take thine ease,
"Secure from wants and fears."

2 Thus while a worldling boasted once,
As many now presume,
He heard the Lord himself pronounce
His sudden, awful doom.

3 "This night, vain fool, thy soul must pass
"Into a world unknown:
"And who shall then the stores possess,
"Which thou hast call'd thine own."

4 Thus blinded mortals fondly scheme
For happiness below;
Till death disturbs the pleasing dream,
And they awake to wo.

5 Ah! who can speak the vast dismay
That fills the sinner's mind,
When, torn by death's strong hand away,
He leaves his all behind.

6 Wretches, who cleave to earthly things,
But are not rich to God;
Their dying hour is full of stings,
And hell their dark abode.

7 Dear Saviour, make us timely wise,
Thy Gospel to attend,
That we may live above the skies
When this poor life shall end.

CIII. *The barren Fig-tree.* Chap. xiii. 6—9.

1 The church a garden is, in which believers stand,
Like ornamental trees, planted by God's own hand:
His Spirit waters all the roots,
And ev'ry branch abounds with fruits.

2 But other trees there are in this enclosure grow,
Which, though they promise fair, have only leaves to show:
No fruits of grace are on them found,
They stand but cumb'rers of the ground.

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3 The under gard'ner grieves, in vain his strength he spends,
For heaps of useless leaves afford him small amends;
He hears the Lord his will make known,
To cut the barren fig-trees down.

4 How difficult his post, what pangs his bowels move,
To find his wishes crost, his labours useless prove!
His last relief, his earnest pray'r,
"Lord, spare them yet another year:

5 "Spare them, and let me try what further means may do;
"I'll fresh manure apply, my digging I'll renew:
"Who knows but yet they fruit may yield!
"If not—'tis just, they must be fell'd."

6 If, under means of grace, no gracious fruits appear,
It is a dreadful case: though God may long forbear,
At length he'll strike the threaten'd blow,*
And lay the barren fig-tree low.

CIV. *The Prodigal Son.* Chap. xv. 11—24.

1 AFFLICTIONS, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent;
They stopp'd the prodigal's career,
And forc'd him to repent.

2 Although he no relentings felt,
Till he had spent his store;
His stubborn heart began to melt
When famine pinch'd him sore.

3 "What have I gain'd by sin," he said,
"But hunger, shame, and fear;
"My father's house abounds with bread,
"While I am starving here.

4 "I'll go and tell him all I've done,
"And fall before his face;
"Unworthy to be call'd his son,
"I'll seek a servant's place."

5 His father saw him coming back,
He saw, and ran, and smil'd;
And threw his arms around the neck
Of his rebellious child.

6 "Father, I've sinn'd—But, Oh forgive!"
"I've heard enough," he said;
"Rejoice my house, my son's alive,
"For whom I mourn'd as dead.

7 "Now let the fatted calf be slain,
"And spread the news around;
"My son was dead, but lives again,
"Was lost, but now is found."

* Book ii. Hymn 26.

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8 'Tis thus the Lord his love reveals,
To call poor sinners home;
More than a father's love he feels,
And welcomes all that come.

CV. *The Rich Man and Lazarus.* Chap. xvi. 19—25.

1 A WORLDLING spent each day in luxury and state;
While a believer lay, a beggar, at his gate:
Think not the Lord's appointment strange;
Death made a great and lasting change.

2 Death brought the saint release from want, disease, and scorn;
And to the land of peace, his soul by angels borne,
In Abr'ham's bosom safely plac'd,
Enjoys an everlasting feast.

3 The rich man also dy'd, and in a moment fell
From all his pomp and pride into the flames of hell:
The beggar's bliss, from far beheld,
His soul with double anguish fill'd.

4 "O Abr'ham send," he cries, (but his request was vain,)
"The beggar from the skies to mitigate my pain!
"One drop of water I entreat,
"To sooth my tongue's tormenting heat."

5 Let all who wordly pelf and worldly spirits have,
Observe, each for himself, the answer Abr'ham gave;
"Remember thou wast fill'd with good,
"While the poor beggar pin'd for food.

6 "Neglected at thy door, with tears he begg'd his bread;
"But now he weeps no more, his griefs and pains are fled;
"His joys eternally will flow,
"While thine expire in endless wo."

7 Lord, make us truly wise, to choose thy people's lot,
And earthly joys despise, which soon will be forgot;
The greatest evil we can fear,
Is to possess our portion here!

CVI. *The Importunate Widow.** Chap. xviii. 1—7.

1 OUR Lord who knows full well
The heart of ev'ry saint,
Invites us by a parable,
To pray and never faint.

2 He bows his gracious ear,
We never plead in vain;
Yet we must wait till he appear,
And pray, and pray again.

3 Though unbelief suggest,
Why should we longer wait?
He bids us never give him rest,
But be importunate.

* Book ii. Hymn 60.

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4 'Twas thus a widow poor,
Without support or friend,
Beset the unjust judge's door,
And gain'd, at last her end.

5 For her he little car'd,
As little for the laws;
Nor God, nor man, did he regard:
Yet he espous'd her cause.

6 She urg'd him day and night,
Would no denial take;
At length he said, "I'll do her right,
"For my own quiet's sake."

7 And shall not Jesus hear
His chosen when they cry?
Yes, though he may awhile forbear,
He'll help them from on high.

8 His nature, truth, and love,
Engage him on their side;
When they are griev'd, his bowel's move,
And can they be deny'd?

9 Then let us earnest be,
And never faint in pray'r;
He loves our importunity,
And makes our cause his care.

CVII. *Zaccheus.* Chap. xix. 1—6.

1 ZACCHEUS climb'd the tree, and thought himself unknown:
But how surpris'd was he when Jesus call'd him down!
The Lord beheld him, though conceal'd,
And by a word his pow'r reveal'd.

2 Wonder and joy at once were painted in his face;
"Does he my name pronounce, and does he know my case?
"Will Jesus deign with me to dine?
"Lord, I, with all I have, am thine."

3 Thus where the Gospel's preach'd, and sinners come to hear,
The hearts of some are reach'd before they are aware:
The word directly speaks to them,
And seems to point them out by name.

4 'Tis curiosity oft brings them in the way,
Only the man to see, and hear what he can say;
But how the sinner starts to find
The preacher knows his inmost mind!

5 His long forgotten faults are brought again in view,
And all his secret thoughts reveal'd in public too:
Though compass'd with a crowd about,
The searching word has found him out.

6 While thus distressing pain and sorrow fills his heart,
He hears a voice again that bids his fears depart:
Then, like Zaccheus, he is blest,
And Jesus deigns to be his guest.

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CVIII. *The Believer's Danger, Safety, and Duty.* Chap. xxii. 31, 32.

1 "SIMON, beware!" the Saviour said,
"Satan, your subtle foe,
"Already has his measures laid,
"Your soul to overthrow.

2 "He wants to sift you all as wheat,
"And thinks his vict'ry sure;
"But I his malice will defeat,
"My pray'r shall faith secure."

3 Believer, tremble and rejoice,
Your help and danger view;
This warning has to you a voice,
This promise speaks to you.

4 Satan beholds, with jealous eye,
Your privilege and joy;
He's always watchful, always nigh,
To tear and to destroy.

5 But Jesus lives to intercede,
That faith may still prevail;
He will support in time of need,
And Satan's arts shall fail.

6 Yet let us not the warning slight,
But watchful still be found;
Though faith cannot be slain in fight,
It may receive a wound.

7 While Satan watches, dare we sleep?
We must our guard maintain;
But, Lord, do thou the city keep,
Or else we watch in vain.*

CIX. *Father, forgive them.* Chap. xxiii. 34.

1 "FATHER, forgive," the Saviour said,
"They know not what they do;"
His heart was mov'd when thus he pray'd
For me, my friends, and you.

2 He saw that as the Jews abus'd
And crucify'd his flesh;
So he, by us, would be refus'd,
And crucify'd afresh.

3 Through love of sin, we long were prone
To act as Satan bid;
But now with grief and shame we own,
We knew not what we did.

4 We knew not the desert of sin,
Nor whom we thus defy'd;
Nor where our guilty souls had been,
If Jesus had not dy'd.

* Psalm cxxvii. 1.

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5 We knew not what a law we broke,
How holy, just, and pure!
Nor what a God we durst provoke,
But thought ourselves secure.

6 But Jesus all our guilt foresaw,
And shed his precious blood
To satisfy the holy law,
And make our peace with God.

7 My sin, dear Saviour, made thee bleed,
Yet didst thou pray for me!
I knew not what I did, indeed,
When ignorant of thee.

CX. *The Two Malefactors.* Chap. xxiii. 39—43.

1 Sov'reign grace has pow'r alone
To subdue a heart of stone;
And the moment grace is felt,
Then the hardest heart will melt.

2 When the Lord was crucify'd,
Two transgressors with him dy'd;
One, with vile blaspheming tongue,
Scoff'd at Jesus as he hung.

3 Thus he spent his wicked breath,
In the very jaws of death;
Perish'd, as too many do,
With the Saviour in his view.

4 But the other, touch'd with grace,
Saw the danger of his case;
Faith receiv'd to own the Lord,
Whom the scribes and priests abhorr'd.

5 "Lord," he pray'd, "remember me,
"When in glory thou shalt be;"—
"Soon with me," the Lord replies,
"Thou shalt rest in paradise."

6 This was wondrous grace indeed,
Grace vouchsaf'd in time of need!
Sinners trust in Jesus' name,
You shall find him still the same.

7 But beware of unbelief,
Think upon the harden'd thief;
If the Gospel you disdain,
Christ, to you, will die in vain.

JOHN.

CXI. *The Woman of Samaria.* Chap. iv. 28.

1 Jesus, to what didst thou submit
To save thy dear-bought flock from hell!
Like a poor trav'ller see him sit,
Athirst and weary by the well.

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2 The woman who for water came,
(What great events on small depend,)
Then learnt the glory of his name,
The well of life, the sinner's friend!

3 Taught from her birth to hate the Jews,
And fill'd with party pride, at first
Her zeal induc'd her to refuse
Water to quench the Saviour's thirst.

4 But soon she knew the gift of God;
And Jesus, whom she scorn'd before,
Unask'd, that drink on her bestow'd,
Which whoso tastes shall thirst no more.

5 His words her prejudice remov'd,
Her sin she felt, relief she found;
She saw and heard, believ'd and lov'd,
And ran to tell her neighbours round:

6 O come, this wondrous man behold!
The promis'd Saviour! this is he
Whom ancient prophecies foretold,
Born, from our guilt to set us free.

7 Like her, in ignorance content,
I worshipp'd long I knew not what;
Like her, on other things intent,
I found him when I sought him not.

8 He told me all that e'er I did,
And told me all was pardon'd too;
And now, like her, as he has bid,
I live to point him out to you.

CXII. *The Pool of Bethesda.** Chap. v. 2—4.

1 Beside the Gospel pool
Appointed for the poor,
From year to year my helpless soul
Has waited for a cure.

2 How often have I seen
The healing waters move;
And others, round me, stepping in,
Their efficacy prove?

3 But my complaints remain;
I feel the very same;
As full of guilt, and fear, and pain,
As when at first I came.

4 Oh, would the Lord appear,
My malady to heal!
He knows how long I've languish'd here,
And what distress I feel.

* Book iii. Hymn 7.

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5 How often have I thought
Why should I longer lie?
Surely the mercy I have sought
Is not for such as I.

6 But whither can I go?
There is no other pool
Where streams of sov'reign virtue flow
To make a sinner whole.

7 Here then, from day to day,
I'll wait, and hope, and try;
Can Jesus hear a sinner pray,
Yet suffer him to die?

8 No: he is full of grace;
He never will permit
A soul that fain would see his face,
To perish at his feet.

CXIII. *Another.*

1 HERE at Bethesda's pool, the poor,
The wither'd halt, and blind,
With waiting hearts expect a cure,
And free admittance find.

2 Here streams of wond'rous virtue flow
To heal a sin-sick soul;
To wash the filthy, white as snow,
And make the wounded whole.

3 The dumb break forth in songs of praise,
The blind their sight receive;
The cripple runs in wisdom's ways,
The dead revive and live!

4 Restrain'd to no one case, or time,
These waters always move;
Sinners in ev'ry age and clime
Their vital influence prove.

5 Yet numbers daily near them lie,
Who meet with no relief;
With life in view they pine and die
In hopeless unbelief.

6 'Tis strange they should refuse to bathe,
And yet frequent the pool;
But none can even wish for faith,
While love of sin bears rule.

7 Satan their consciences has seal'd,
And stupify'd their thought;
For were they willing to be heal'd,
The cure would soon be wrought.

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8 Do thou, dear Saviour, interpose,
Their stubborn wills constrain;
Or else to them the water flows,
And grace is preach'd in vain.

CXIV. *The Disciples at Sea.** Chap. vi. 16—21.

1 Constrain'd by their Lord to embark,
And venture, without him, to sea;
The season tempestuous and dark,
How griev'd the disciples must be!
But though he remain'd on the shore,
He spent the night for them in prayer;
They still were as safe as before,
And equally under his care.

2 They strove, though in vain, for a while,
The force of the waves to withstand;
But when they were weary with toil,
They saw their dear Saviour at hand:
They gladly receiv'd him on board,
His presence their spirits reviv'd,
The sea became calm at his word,
And soon at their port they arriv'd.

3 We like the disciples, are toss'd,
By storms, on a perilous deep;
But cannot be possibly lost,
For Jesus hath charge of the ship:
Though billows and winds are enrag'd,
And threaten to make us their sport,
This pilot his word has engag'd
To bring us, in safety, to port.

4 If sometimes we struggle alone,
And he is withdrawn from our view,
It makes us more willing to own
We nothing without him can do:
Then Satan our hopes would assail,
But Jesus is still within call;
And when our poor efforts quite fail,
He comes in good time, and does all.

5 Yet, Lord, we are ready to shrink,
Unless we thy presence perceive;
O save us, (we cry,) or we sink,
We would, but we cannot believe:
The night has been long and severe,
The winds and the sea are still high,
Dear Saviour, this moment appear,
And say to our souls, "It is I."†

* Book ii. Hymn 87. † Book iii. Hymn 18.

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CXV. *Will ye also go away?* Chap. vi. 67—69.

1 When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas! what numbers do!)
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
"Wilt thou forsake me too?"

2 Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.

3 Yet thou alone hast pow'r, I know,
To save a wretch like me;
To whom, or whither, could I go,
If I should turn from thee?

4 Beyond a doubt I rest assur'd,
Thou art the Christ of God,
Who hast eternal life secur'd
By promise and by blood.

5 The help of men and angels join'd,
Could never reach my case;
Nor can I hope relief to find,
But in thy boundless grace.

6 No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart;
No love but thine can make me bless'd,
And satisfy my heart.

7 What anguish has that question stirr'd,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No.

CXVI. *The Resurrection and the Life.* Chap. xi. 25.

1 "I am," saith Christ, "your glorious head,"
(May we attention give,)
"The resurrection of the dead,
"The life of all that live.

2 "By faith in me the soul receives
"New life, though dead before;
"And he that in my name believes,
"Shall live, to die no more!

3 "The sinner, sleeping in his grave,
"Shall at my voice awake;
"And when I once begin to save,
"My work I ne'er forsake."

4 Fulfil thy promise, gracious Lord,
On us assembled here;
Put forth thy Spirit with the word,
And cause the dead to hear.

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5 Preserve the pow'r of faith alive
In those who love thy name;
For sin and Satan daily strive
To quench the sacred flame.

6 Thy pow'r and mercy first prevail'd,
From death to set us free;
And often since our life had fail'd,
If not renew'd by thee.

7 To thee we look, to thee we bow,
To thee for help we call;
Our life and resurrection thou,
Our hope, our joy, our all.

CXVII. *Weeping Mary.* Chap. xx. 11—16.

1 MARY to her Saviour's tomb
Hasted at the early dawn;
Spice she brought, and sweet perfume;
But the Lord she lov'd was gone.
For a while she weeping stood,
Struck with sorrow and surprise,
Shedding tears, a plenteous flood,
For her heart supply'd her eyes.

2 Jesus, who is always near,
Though too often unperceiv'd,
Came, his drooping child to cheer,
Kindly asking why she griev'd.
Though at first she knew him not,
When he call'd her by her name,
Then her griefs were all forgot,
For she found he was the same.

3 Grief and sighing quickly fled,
When she heard his welcome voice;
Just before she thought him dead,
Now he bids her heart rejoice.
What a change his word can make,
Turning darkness into day!
You who weep for Jesus' sake,
He will wipe your tears away.

4 He who came to comfort her,
When she thought her all was lost,
Will for your relief appear,
Though you now are tempest-toss'd:
On his word your burden cast,
On his love your thoughts employ;
Weeping for a while may last,
But the morning brings the joy.

CXVIII. C. *Lovest thou me?* Chap. xxi. 16.

1 HARK, my soul! it is the Lord;
'Tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee:
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"

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2 "I deliver'd thee when bound,
"And, when wounded, heal'd thy wound;
"Sought thee wand'ring, set thee right,
"Turn'd thy darkness into light.

3 "Can a woman's tender care
"Cease towards the child she bare?
"Yes, she may forgetful be,
"Yet will I remember thee.

4 "Mine is an unchanging love,
"Higher than the heights above;
"Deeper than the depths beneath,
"Free and faithful, strong as death.

5 "Thou shalt see my glory soon,
"When the work of grace is done;
"Partner of my throne shall be;
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"

6 Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee and adore,
Oh, for grace to love thee more!

CXIX. *Another.*

1 'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?

2 If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name!

3 Could my heart so hard remain,
Pray'r a task and burden prove,
Ev'ry trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?

4 When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Fill'd with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?

5 If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mix'd with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me, is it thus with you?

6 Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall;
Should I grieve for what I feel
If I did not love at all?

7 Could I joy his saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorr'd,
Find, at times, the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?

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8 Lord, decide the doubtful case!
Thou who art thy people's sun,
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

9 Let me love thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not lov'd before,
Help me to begin to-day.

ACTS.

CXX. *The Death of Stephen.* Chap. vii. 54—60.

1 As some tall rock amidst the waves
The fury of the tempest braves,
While the fierce billows, tossing high,
Break at its foot, and, murm'ring die:

2 Thus, they who in the Lord confide,
Though foes assault on ev'ry side,
Cannot be mov'd or overthrown,
For Jesus makes their cause his own.

3 So faithful Stephen, undismay'd,
The malice of the Jews survey'd;
The holy joy which fill'd his breast,
A lustre on his face impress'd.

4 "Behold!" he said, "the world of light
"Is open'd to my strengthen'd sight;
"My glorious Lord appears in view,
"That Jesus whom ye lately slew."

5 With such a friend and witness near,
No form of death could make him fear;
Calm, amidst show'rs of stones, he kneels,
And only for his murd'rers feels.

6 May we, by faith, perceive thee thus,
Dear Saviour, ever near to us!
This sight our peace through life shall keep,
And death be fear'd no more than sleep.

CXXI. *The Rebel's Surrender to Grace. Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?* Chap. ix. 6.

1 Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.

2 All that a wretch could do, I try'd,
Thy patience scorn'd, thy pow'r defy'd,
And trampled on thy laws;
Scarcely thy martyrs at the stake,
Could stand more steadfast for thy sake,
Than I in Satan's cause.

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5 But since thou hast thy love reveal'd,
And shown my soul a pardon seal'd,
I can resist no more:
Couldst thou for such a sinner bleed?
Canst thou for such a rebel plead?
I wonder and adore!

4 If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been:
But mercy has my heart subdu'd,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
Come, take possession of thine own,
For thou hast set me free;
Releas'd from Satan's hard command,
See all my powers waiting stand,
To be employ'd by thee.

6 My will conform'd to thine would move!
On thee my hope, desire, and love,
In fix'd attention join;
My hands, my eyes, my ears, my tongue,
Have Satan's servants been too long,
But now they shall be thine.

7 And can I be the very same,
Who lately durst blaspheme thy name,
And on thy gospel tread?
Surely each one who hears my case,
Will praise thee, and confess thy grace
Invincible indeed!

CXXII. *Peter released from Prison.* Chap. xii. 5—8.

1 Fervent, persevering pray'rs
Are faith's assur'd resource;
Brazen gates and iron bars
In vain withstand their force:
Peter, when in prison cast,
Though by soldiers kept with care,
Though the doors were bolted fast,
Was soon releas'd by pray'r.

2 While he slept an angel came,
And spread a light around,
Touch'd, and call'd him by his name,
And rais'd him from the ground;
All his chains and fetters burst,
Ev'ry door wide open flew;
Peter thought he dream'd at first,
But found the vision true.

3 Thus the Lord can make a way
To bring his saints relief;
'Tis their part to wait and pray,
In spite of unbelief:

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He can break through walls of stone,
Sink the mountain to a plain;
They to whom his name is known
Can never pray in vain.

4 Thus, in chains of guilt and sin,
Poor sinners sleeping lie;
No alarm is felt within,
Although condemn'd to die;
'Till descending from above,
(Mercy smiling in his eyes,)
Jesus, with a voice of love,
Awakes, and bids them rise.

5 Glad the summons they obey,
And liberty desire;
Straight their fetters melt away,
Like wax before the fire:
By the word of him who dy'd,
Guilty pris'ners to release,
Ev'ry door flies open wide,
And they depart in peace.

CXXIII. *The trembling Gaoler.* Chap. xvi. 29—31.

1 A BELIEVER, free from care,
May in chains or dungeons sing,
If the Lord be with him there,
And be happier than a king:
Paul and Silas, thus confin'd,
Though their backs were torn by whips,
Yet possessing peace of mind,
Sung his praise with joyful lips.

2 Suddenly the prison shook,
Open flew the iron doors;
And the goaler, terror-struck,
Now his captives' help implores:
Trembling, at their feet he fell,
"Tell me sirs, what must I do
"To be sav'd from guilt and hell?
"None can tell me this but you."

3 "Look to Jesus," they reply'd,
"If in him thou canst believe,
"By the death which he has dy'd,
"Thou salvation shalt receive."
While the living word he heard,
Faith sprung up within his heart,
And, releas'd from all he fear'd,
In their joy his soul had part.

4 Sinners, Christ is still the same;
O that you could likewise fear!
Then the mention of his name
Would be music to your ear:
Jesus rescues Satan's slaves,
His dear wounds still plead "Forgive!"
Jesus to the utmost saves;
Sinners, look to him and live.

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CXXIV. *The Exorcists.* Chap. xix. 13—16.

1 When the apostle wonders wrought,
And heal'd the sick in Jesus' name,
The sons of Sceva vainly thought
That they had pow'r to do the same.

2 On one possess'd they try'd their art,
And, naming Jesus preach'd by Paul,
They charg'd the spirit to depart,
Expecting he'd obey their call.

3 The spirit answer'd, with a mock,
"Jesus I know, and Paul I know;
"I must have gone if Paul had spoke;
"But who are ye that bid me go?"

4 With fury then the man he fill'd,
Who on the poor pretenders flew;
Naked and wounded, almost kill'd,
They fled in all the people's view.

5 Jesus! that name, pronounc'd by faith,
Is full of wonder-working pow'r;
It conquers Satan, sin, and death,
And cheers in trouble's darkest hour.

6 But they who are not born again,
Know nothing of it but the sound;
They do but take his name in vain,
When most their zeal and pains abound.

7 Satan their vain attempts derides,
Whether they talk, or pray, or preach;
Long as the love of sin abides,
His pow'r is safe beyond their reach.

8 But you, believers, may rejoice,
Satan well knows your mighty Friend;
He trembles at your Saviour's voice,
And owns he cannot gain his end.

CXXV. *Paul's Voyage.* Chap. xxvii.

1 If Paul in Cæsar's court must stand,
He need not fear the sea;
Secur'd from harm on ev'ry hand
By the divine decree.

2 Although the ship, in which he sail'd,
By dreadful storms was toss'd;
The promise over all prevail'd,
And not a life was lost.

3 Jesus! the God whom Paul ador'd,
Who saves in time of need;
Was then confess'd, by all on board,
A present help indeed!

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4 Though neither sun nor stars were seen,
Paul knew the Lord was near;
And faith preserv'd his soul serene,
When others shook for fear.

5 Believers thus are toss'd about,
On life's tempestuous main;
But grace assures, beyond a doubt,
They shall their port attain.

6 They must, they shall, appear one day,
Before their Saviour's throne;
The storms they meet with by the way,
But make his power known.

7 Their passage lies across the brink
Of many a threat'ning wave;
The world expects to see them sink,
But Jesus lives to save.

8 Lord, though we are but feeble worms,
Yet since thy word is past,
We'll venture, through a thousand storms,
To see thy face at last.

ROMANS.

CXXVI. *The good that I would, I do not.* Chap. vii. 19.

1 I WOULD, but cannot sing,
Guilt has untun'd my voice;
The serpent sin's envenom'd sting
Has poison'd all my joys.

2 I know the Lord is nigh,
And would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

3 I would, but can't repent,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent
Till Jesus make it soft.

4 I would, but cannot love,
Though woo'd by love divine;
No arguments have pow'r to move
A soul so base as mine.

5 I would, but cannot rest
In God's most holy will;
I know what he appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.

6 Oh could I but believe!
Then all would easy be!
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve;
My help must come from thee!

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7 But if indeed I would,
Though I can nothing do;
Yet the desire is something good,
For which my praise is due.

8 By nature prone to ill,
Till thine appointed hour,
I was as destitute of will,
As now I am of pow'r.

9 Wilt thou not crown, at length,
The work thou hast begun?
And with a will, afford me strength
In all thy ways ro run.

CXXVII. *Salvation drawing nearer.* Chap. xiii. 11, 12.

1 Darkness overspreads us here,
But the night wears fast away;
Jacob's Star will soon appear,
Leading on eternal day!
Now 'tis time to rouse from sleep,
Trim our lamps, and stand prepar'd;
For our Lord strict watch to keep,
Lest he finds us off our guard.

2 Let his people courage take,
Bear with a submissive mind
All they suffer for his sake,
Rich amends they soon will find:
He will wipe away their tears,
Near himself appoint their lot;
All their sorrows, pains, and fears,
Quickly then will be forgot.

3 Though already sav'd by grace,
From the hour we first believ'd;
Yet, while sin and war have place,
We have but a part receiv'd:
Still we for salvation wait,
Ev'ry hour it nearer comes!
Death will break the prison-gate,
And admit us to our homes.

4 Sinners, what can you expect,
You who now the Saviour dare,
Break his laws, his grace reject,
You must stand before his bar!
Tremble, lest he say, Depart!
Oh the horrors of that sound!
Lord, make every careless heart
Seek thee while thou mayst be found.

I. CORINTHIANS.

CXXVIII. *That Rock was Christ.* Chap. x. 4.

1 When Israel's tribes were parch'd with thirst,
Forth from the rock the waters burst;

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And all their future journey through
Yielded them drink, and Gospel too!

2 In Moses' rod a type they saw
Of his severe and fiery law;
The smitten rock prefigur'd Him
From whose pierc'd side all blessings stream.

3 But, ah! the types were all too faint,
His sorrows or his worth to paint;
Slight was the stroke of Moses' rod,
But he endur'd the wrath of God.

4 Their outward rock could feel no pain,
But ours was wounded, torn, and slain;
The rock gave but a wat'ry flood,
But Jesus pour'd forth streams of blood.

5 The earth is like their wilderness,
A land of drought and sore distress,
Without one stream, from pole to pole,
To satisfy a thirsty soul.

6 But let the Saviour's praise resound;
In him refreshing streams are found,
Which pardon, strength, and comfort give;
And thirsty sinners drink and live.

II. CORINTHIANS.

CXXIX. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* Chap. xii. 9.

1 Oppress'd with unbelief and sin,
Fightings without, and fears within;
While earth and hell, with force combin'd,
Assault and terrify my mind.

2 What strength have I against such foes,
Such hosts and legions to oppose?
Alas! I tremble, faint, and fall;
Lord, save me, or I give up all.

3 Thus sorely prest, I sought the Lord,
To give me some sweet, cheering word;
Again I sought, and yet again;
I waited long, but not in vain.

4 Oh! 'twas a cheering word indeed!
Exactly suited to my need:
"Sufficient for thee is my grace,
"Thy weakness my great pow'r displays."

5 Now I despond and mourn no more,
I welcome all I fear'd before;
Though weak, I'm strong; though troubled, blest;
For Christ's own pow'r shall on me rest.

6 My grace would soon exhausted be,
But his is boundless as the sea;

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Then let me boast, with holy Paul,
That I am nothing, Christ is all.

GALATIANS.

CXXX. *The inward Warfare.* Chap. v. 17.

1 Strange and mysterious is my life,
What opposites I feel within!
A stable peace; a constant strife;
The rule of grace, the pow'r of sin:
Too often I am captive led,
Yet daily triumph in my Head.

2 I prize the privilege of pray'r,
But, oh! what backwardness to pray!
Though on the Lord I cast my care,
I feel its burden ev'ry day;
I seek his will in all I do,
Yet find my own is working too.

3 I call the promises my own,
And prize them more than mines of gold;
Yet though their sweetness I have known,
They leave me unimpress'd and cold:
One hour upon the truth I feed,
The next I know not what I read.

4 I love the holy day of rest,
When Jesus meets his gather'd saints;
Sweet day, of all the week the best!
For its return my spirit pants:
Yet often, through my unbelief,
It proves a day of guilt and grief.

5 While on my Saviour I rely,
I know my foes shall lose their aim;
And therefore dare their pow'r defy,
Assur'd of conquest through his name:
But soon my confidence is slain,
And all my fears return again.

6 Thus diff'rent pow'rs within me strive,
And grace and sin by turns prevail;
I grieve, rejoice, decline, revive,
And vict'ry hangs in doubtful scale:
But Jesus has his promise past,
That grace shall overcome at last.

PHILIPPIANS.

CXXXI. C. *Contentment.** Chap. iv. 11.

1 Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea;
But calm content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to thee.

*Book iii. Hymn 55.

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2 In vain, by reason and by rule,
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heav'nly skill.

3 Since at his feet my soul has sat,
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on him my care.

4 "Art thou a sinner, soul?" he said,
"Then how canst thou complain?
"How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd,
"With everlasting pain!

5 "If thou of murm'ring wouldst be cur'd,
"Compare thy griefs with mine;
"Think what my love for thee endur'd,
"And thou wilt not repine.

6 "'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
"And I do all things well;
"Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
"And rise, with me to dwell.

7 "In life my grace shall strength supply,
"Proportion'd to thy day;
"At death thou still shalt find me nigh,
"To wipe thy tears away."

8 Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,
Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learn'd to be content.

HEBREWS.

CXXXII. C. *Old Testament Gospel.* Chap. iv. 2.

1 Israel, in ancient days, not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze, but learn'd the Gospel too:
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw the Saviour's face.

2 The paschal sacrifice, and blood-besprinkled door,*
Seen with enlighten'd eyes, and once apply'd with pow'r,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

3 The lamb, the dove, set forth his perfect innocence,†
Whose blood of matchless worth, should be the soul's defence;
For he who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of his own.

4 The scape-goat on his head‡ the people's trespass bore;
And, to the desert led, was to be seen no more:
In him our Surety seem'd to say,
"Behold, I bear your sins away."

* Exodus xii. 13. † Lev. xii. 6. ‡ Lev. xvi. 21.

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5 Dipt in his fellow's blood, the living bird went free;*
The type, well understood, express'd the sinner's plea;
Describ'd a guilty soul enlarg'd,
And by a Saviour's death discharg'd.

6 Jesus, I love to trace throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of thy grace, the same in ev'ry age!
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light, vouchsaf'd to me!

CXXXIII. *The Word quick and powerful.* Chap. iv. 12, 13.

1 The word of Christ, our Lord,
With whom we have to do,
Is sharper than a two-edg'd sword,
To pierce the sinner through!

2 Swift as the lightning's blaze,
When awful thunders roll,
It fills the conscience with amaze,
And penetrates the soul.

3 No heart can be conceal'd
From his all-piercing eyes;
Each thought and purpose stands reveal'd,
Naked, without disguise.

4 He sees his people's fears,
He notes their mournful cry;
He counts their sighs and falling tears,
And helps them from on high.

5 Though feeble is their good,
It has its kind regard;
Yea, all they would do, if they could,
Shall find a sure reward.†

6 He sees the wicked too,
And will repay them soon
For all the evil deeds they do,
And all they would have done.‡

7 Since all our secret ways
Are mark'd and known by thee,
Afford us, Lord, thy light of grace,
That we ourselves may see.

CXXXIV. *Looking unto Jesus.* Chap. xii. 2.

1 By various maxims, forms, and rules,
That pass for wisdom in the schools,
I strove my passion to restrain!
But all my efforts prov'd in vain.

2 But since the Saviour I have known,
My rules are all reduc'd to one,
To keep my Lord, by faith, in view;
This strength supplies, and motives too.

* Lev. xiv. 51—53. † 1 Kings viii. 18. ‡ Matt. v. 28.

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3 I see him lead a suff'ring life,
Patient amidst reproach and strife;
And from his pattern courage take
To bear, and suffer, for his sake.

4 Upon the cross I see him bleed,
And by the sight from guilt am freed;
This sight destroys the life of sin,
And quickens heav'nly life within.

5 To look to Jesus as he rose,
Confirms my faith, disarms my foes;
Satan I shame and overcome,
By pointing to my Saviour's tomb.

6 Exalted on his glorious throne,
I see him make my cause his own;
Then all my anxious cares subside,
For Jesus lives, and will provide.

7 I see him look with pity down,
And hold in view the conqu'ror's crown;
If press'd with griefs and cares before,
My soul revives, nor asks for more.

8 By faith I see the hour at hand,
When in his presence I shall stand;
Then it will be my endless bliss,
To see him where, and as he is.

CXXXV. *Love Tokens.* Chap. xii. 5—11.

1 Afflictions do not come alone,
A voice attends the rod;
By both he to his saints is known,
A Father and a God!

2 "Let not my children slight the stroke
"I for chastisement send;
"Nor faint beneath my kind rebuke,
"For still I am their Friend.

3 "The wicked I perhaps may leave
"A while, and not reprove;
"But all the children I receive
"I scourge, because I love.

4 "If, therefore, you were left without
"This needful discipline,
"You might, with cause, admit a doubt
"If you, indeed, were mine.

5 "Shall earthly parents then expect
"Their children to submit?
"And will not you, when I correct,
"Be humbled at my feet?

6 "To please themselves they oft chastise,
"And put their sons to pain;
"But you are precious in my eyes,
"And shall not smart in vain.

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7 "I see your hearts at present fill'd
"With grief and deep distress;
"But soon these bitter seeds shall yield
"The fruits of righteousness."

8 Break through the clouds, dear Lord, and shine!
Let us perceive thee nigh!
And to each mourning child of thine
These gracious words apply.

REVELATION.

CXXXVI. *Ephesus.* Chap. ii. 1—7.

1 Thus saith the Lord to Ephesus,
And thus he speaks to some of us:
"Amidst my churches, lo! I stand,
"And hold the pastors in my hand.

2 "Thy works to me are fully known,
"Thy patience, and thy toil I own;
"Thy views of Gospel-truth are clear,
"Nor canst thou other doctrine bear.

3 "Yet I must blame, while I approve;
"Where is thy first, thy fervent love?
"Dost thou forget my love to thee,
"That thine is grown so faint to me?

4 "Recall to mind the happy days
"When thou wast fill'd with joy and praise;
"Repent, thy former works renew,
"Then I'll restore thy comforts too.

5 "Return at once, when I reprove,
"Lest I thy candlestick remove,
"And thou, too late, thy loss lament;
"I warn before I strike—Repent."

6 Hearken to what the Spirit saith,
To him that overcomes by faith;
"The fruit of life's unfading tree,
"In Paradise, his food shall be."

CXXXVII. *Smyrna.* Chap. ii. 8—11.

1 The message first to Smyrna sent,
A message full of grace,
To all the Saviour's flock is meant,
In ev'ry age and place.

2 Thus to his church, his chosen bride,
Saith the great First and Last,
Who ever lives, though once he died,
"Hold thy profession fast.

3 "Thy works and sorrow well I know,
"Perform'd and borne for me;
"Poor though thou art, despis'd and low,
"Yet who is rich like thee?

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4 "I know thy foes, and what they say,
"How long they have blaspheme'd;
"The synagogue of Satan they,
"Though they would Jews be deem'd.

5 "Though Satan for a season rage,
"And prisons be your lot,
"I am your Friend, and I engage
"You shall not be forgot.

6 "Be faithful unto death, nor fear
"A few short days of strife;
"Behold! the prize you soon shall wear,
"A crown of endless life!"

7 Hear what the Holy Spirit saith
Of all who overcome;
"They shall escape the second death,
"The sinner's awful doom!"

CXXXVIII. C. *Sardis.* Chap. iii. 1—6.

1 "WRITE to Sardis," saith the Lord,
"And write what he declares,
"He whose Spirit, and whose word,
"Upholds the seven stars:
"All thy works and ways I search,
"Find thy zeal and love decay'd;
"Thou art call'd a living church,
"But thou art cold and dead.

2 "Watch, remember, seek, and strive,
"Exert thy former pains:
"Let thy timely care revive,
"And strengthen what remains:
"Cleanse thine heart, thy works amend,
"Former times to mind recall;
"Lest my sudden stroke descend,
"And smite thee once for all.

3 "Yet I number now in thee
"A few that are upright;
"These my Father's face shall see,
"And walk with me in white:
"When in judgment I appear,
"They for mine shall be confest;
"Let my faithful servants hear,
"And wo be to the rest."

CXXXIX. *Philadelphia.* Chap. iii. 7—13.

1 THUS saith the holy One and true,
To his beloved, faithful few,
"Of heav'n and hell I hold the keys,
"To shut, or open, as I please.

2 "I know thy works, and I approve,
"Tho' small thy strength, sincere thy love;
"Go on, my word and name to own,
"For none shall rob thee of thy crown.

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3 "Before thee see my mercy's door
"Stands open wide to shut no more;
"Fear not temptation's fiery day,
"For I will be thy strength and stay.

4 "Thou hast my promise, hold it fast,
"The trying hour will soon be past:
"Rejoice, for, lo! I quickly come,
"To take thee to my heav'nly home.

5 "A pillar there no more to move,
"Inscrib'd with all my names of love;
"A monument of mighty grace,
"Thou shalt for ever have a place."

6 Such is the conqueror's reward,
Prepar'd and promis'd by the Lord!
Let him that hath the ear of faith
Attend to what the Spirit saith.

CXL. *Laodicea.* Chap. iii. 14—20.

1 HEAR what the Lord, the great Amen,
The true and faithful witness says!
He form'd the vast creation's plan,
And searches all our hearts and ways.

2 To some he speaks as once of old,
"I know thee, thy profession's vain;
"Since thou art neither hot nor cold,
"I'll spit thee from me with disdain.

3 "Thou boastest 'I am wise and rich,
"'Increas'd in goods, and nothing need;'
"And dost not know thou art a wretch,
"Naked, and poor, and blind, and dead.

4 "Yet while I thus rebuke, I love,
"My message is in mercy sent;
"That thou mayst my compassion prove,
"I can forgive, if thou repent.

5 "Would'st thou be truly rich and wise?
"Come, buy my gold in fire well try'd,
"My ointment, to anoint thine eyes,
"My robe, thy nakedness to hide.

6 "See at thy door I stand and knock!
"Poor sinner, shall I wait in vain?
"Quickly thy stubborn heart unlock,
"That I may enter with my train.

7 "Thou canst not entertain a king,
"Unworthy thou of such a guest!
"But I my own provisions bring,
"To make thy soul a heav'nly feast."

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CXLI. *The Little Book.** Chap. x.

1 When the belov'd disciple took
The angel's little, open book,
Which by the Lord's command he eat,
It tasted bitter after sweet.

2 Thus when the Gospel is embrac'd,
At first 'tis sweeter to the taste
Than honey or the honey-comb,
But there's a bitterness to come.

3 What sweetness does the promise yield,
When by the Spirit's power seal'd?
The longing soul is fill'd with good,
Nor feels a wish for other food.

4 By these inviting tastes allur'd,
We pass to what must be endur'd;
For soon we find it is decreed,
That bitter must to sweet succeed.

5 When sin revives and shows its pow'r,
When Satan threatens to devour,
When God afflicts, and men revile,
We draw our steps with pain and toil.

6 When thus deserted, tempest-tost,
The sense of former sweetness lost,
We tremble lest we were deceiv'd
In thinking that we once believ'd.

7 The Lord first makes the sweetness known,
To win and fix us for his own;
And though we now some bitter meet,
We hope for everlasting sweet.

* Book iii. Hymn 27.

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OLNEY HYMNS, &c.

BOOK II.

ON OCCASIONAL SUBJECTS.

I. SEASONS.
II. ORDINANCES.
III. PROVIDENCES.
IV. CREATION.

I. SEASONS.

NEW-YEAR'S HYMNS.

I. *Time, how swift!*

1 While with ceaseless course the sun
Hasted through the former year,
Many souls their race have run,
Never more to meet us here;
Fix'd in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
But how little—none can know.

2 As the winged arrow flies,
Speedily the mark to find;
As the lightning from the skies
Darts, and leaves no trace behind;
Swiftly thus our fleeting days
Bear us down life's rapid stream;
Upwards, Lord, our spirits raise,
All below is but a dream.

3 Thanks for mercies past receiv'd,
Pardon of our sins renew;
Teach us, henceforth, how to live
With eternity in view:
Bless thy word to young and old,
Fill us with a Saviour's love;
And when life's short tale is told,
May we dwell with thee above.

II. *Time, how short!*

1 Time, with an unwearied hand,
Pushes round the seasons past;
And in life's frail glass the sand
Sinks apace, not long to last:
Many, who, as you and I,
The last year assembled thus,
In their silent graves now lie;
Graves will open soon for us!

2 Daily sin, and care, and strife,
While the Lord prolongs our breath,
Make it but a dying life,
Or a kind of living death:
Wretched they, and most forlorn,
Who no better portion know;
Better ne'er to have been born,
Than to have our all below.

3 When constrain'd to go alone,
Leaving all you love behind,
Ent'ring on a world unknown,
What will then support your mind?
When the Lord his summons sends,*
Earthly comforts lose their pow'r;
Honour, riches, kindred, friends,
Cannot cheer a dying hour.

* Isaiah x. 3.

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4 Happy souls who fear the Lord;
Time is not too swift for you;
When your Saviour gives the word,
Glad you'll bid the world adieu:
Then he'll wipe away your tears,
Near himself appoint your place;
Swifter fly, ye rolling years,
Lord, we long to see thy face.

III. *Uncertainty of Life.*

1 See! another year is gone!
Quickly have the seasons pass'd!
This we enter now upon,
May to many prove their last:
Mercy hitherto has spar'd,
But have mercies been improv'd?
Let us ask, Am I prepar'd,
Should I be this year remov'd?

2 Some we now no longer see,
Who their mortal race have run,
Seem'd as fair for life as we,
When the former year begun:
Some, but who God only knows,
Who are here assembled now,
Ere the present year shall close,
To the stroke of death must bow.

3 Life a field of battle is,
Thousands fall within our view;
And the next death-bolt that flies,
May be sent to me or you;
While we preach, and while we hear,
Help us, Lord, each one, to think,
Vast eternity is near,
I am standing on the brink.

4 If from guilt and sin set free,
By the knowledge of thy grace,
Welcome, then, the call will be
To depart and see thy face:
To thy saints, while here below,
With new years new mercies come;
But the happiest year they know
Is their last, which leads them home.

IV. *A New-Year's Thought and Prayer.*

1 Time, by moments, steals away,
First the hour and then the day;
Small the daily loss appears,
Yet it soon amounts to years:
Thus another year is flown,
Now it is no more our own,
If it brought or promis'd good,
Than the years before the flood.

2 But, (may none of us forget,)
It has left us much in debt;
Favours from the Lord receiv'd,
Sins that have his Spirit griev'd
Mark'd by an unerring hand,
In his book recorded stand;
Who can tell the vast amount,
Plac'd to each of our account?

3 Happy the believing soul!
Christ for you has paid the whole;
While you own the debt is large,
You may plead a full discharge:
But, poor careless sinner, say,
What can you to justice pay?
Tremble, lest when life is past,
Into prison you be cast!

4 Will you still increase the score?
Still be careless as before?
Oh! forbid it, gracious Lord,
Touch their spirits by thy word!
Now, in mercy, to them show
What a mighty debt they owe!
All their unbelief subdue;
Let them find forgiveness too.

5 Spar'd to see another year,
Let thy blessing meet us here;
Come, thy dying work revive,
Bid thy drooping garden thrive:
Sun of righteousness, arise!
Warm our hearts and bless our eyes;
Let our pray'r thy bowels move,
Make this year a time of love.

V. *Death and War.* 1778.

1 Hark! how time's wide-sounding bell
Strikes on each attentive ear!
Tolling loud the solemn knell
Of the late departed year;
Years, like mortals, wear away,
Have their birth and dying day,
Youthful spring, and wintry age,
Then to others quit the stage.

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2 Sad experience may relate
What a year the last has been!
Crops of sorrow have been great,
From the fruitful seeds of sin:
Oh! what numbers, gay and blythe,
Fell by death's unsparing scythe?
While they thought the world their own,
Suddenly he mow'd them down.

3 See how war, with dreadful stride,
Marches at the Lord's command,
Spreading desolation wide, [land:
Through a once much-favour'd
War, with heart and arms of steel,
Preys on thousands at a meal;
Daily drinking human gore,
Still he thirsts and calls for more.

4 If the God whom we provoke,
Hither should his way direct;
What a sin-avenging stroke
May a land like this expect!
They who now securely sleep,
Quickly then would wake and weep;
And too late would learn to fear,
When they saw the danger near.

5 You are safe who know his love,
He will all his truth perform;
To your souls a refuge prove
From the rage of ev'ry storm:
But we tremble for the youth;
Teach them, Lord, thy saving truth;
Join them to thy faithful few,
Be to them a refuge too.

VI. *Earthly Prospects Deceitful.*

1 Oft in vain the voice of truth
Solemnly and loudly warns;
Thoughtless, inexperienc'd youth,
Though it hears, the warning scorns:
Youth in fancy's glass surveys
Life prolong'd to distant years,
While the vast imagin'd space
Fill'd with sweets and joys appears.

2 Awful disappointment soon
Overclouds the prospect gay;
Some their sun goes down at noon,
Torn by death's strong hand away:
Where are then their pleasing schemes?
Where the joys they hop'd to find?
Gone for ever, like their dreams,
Leaving not a trace behind.

3 Others, who are spar'd a while,
Live to weep o'er fancy's cheat;
Find distress, and pain, and toil,
Bitter things instead of sweet:
Sin has spread a curse around,
Poison'd all things here below;
On this base, polluted ground
Peace and joy can never grow.

4 Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life with all its cares,
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares;
Though you oft have heard in vain,
Former years in folly spent,
Grace invites you yet again,
Once more calls you to repent.

5 Call'd again, at length beware,
Hear the Saviour's voice, and live;
Lest he in his wrath should swear
He no more will warning give:
Pray that you may hear and feel,
Ere the day of grace be past;
Lest your hearts grow hard as steel,
Or this year should prove your last.

HYMNS

BEFORE ANNUAL SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON NEW-YEAR'S EVENINGS.

VII. *Prayer for a Blessing.*

1 Now, gracious Lord, thine arm reveal,
And make thy glory known;
Now let us all thy presence feel,
And soften hearts of stone!

2 Help us to venture near thy throne,
And plead a Saviour's name;
For all that we can call our own
Is vanity and shame.

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3 From all the guilt of former sin
May mercy set us free;
And let the year we now begin,
Begin and end with thee.

4 Send down thy Spirit from above,
That saints may love thee more;
And sinners now may learn to love,
Who never lov'd before.

5 And when before thee we appear,
In our eternal home,
May growing numbers worship here,
And praise thee in our room.

VIII. C. *Another.*

1 Bestow, dear Lord, upon our youth
The gift of saving grace;
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place.

2 Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heav'nly root;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit.

3 Ye careless ones, O hear betimes
The voice of sov'reign love!
Your youth is stain'd with many crimes,
But mercy reigns above.

4 True, you are young, but there's a stone
Within the youngest breast, [done
Or half the crimes which you have
Would rob you of your rest.

5 For you the public pray'r is made,
Oh! join the public pray'r!
For you the secret tear is shed,
O shed yourselves a tear!

6 We pray that you may early prove
The Spirit's power to teach;
You cannot be too young to love
That Jesus whom we preach.

IX. *Another.*

1 Now may fervent pray'r arise
Wing'd with faith and pierce the skies;
Fervent pray'r shall bring us down
Gracious answers from the throne.

2 Bless, O Lord, the op'ning year,
To each soul assembled here;
Clothe thy word with pow'r divine,
Make us willing to be thine.

3 Shepherd of thy blood-bought sheep!
Teach the stony heart to weep;
Let the blind have eyes to see,
See themselves, and look on thee!

4 Let the minds of all our youth
Feel the force of sacred truth;
While the Gospel call they hear,
May they learn to love and fear.

5 Show them what their ways have been,
Show them the desert of sin;
Then thy dying love reveal,
This shall melt a heart of steel.

6 Where thou hast thy work begun,
Give new strength the race to run;
Scatter darkness, doubts, and fears,
Wipe away the mourner's tears.

7 Bless us all, both old and young;
Call forth praise from ev'ry tongue;
Let the whole assembly prove
All thy power and all thy love.

X. *Casting the Gospel Net.*

1 When Peter, through the tedious night,*
Had often cast his net in vain;
Soon as the Lord appear'd in sight,
He gladly let it down again.

2 Once more the Gospel net we cast,
Do thou, O Lord, the effort own;
We learn from disappointments past,
To rest our hope on thee alone.

3 Upheld by thy supporting hand,
We enter on another year;
And now we meet, at thy command,
To seek thy gracious presence here.

4 May this be a much-favour'd hour
To soul's in Satan's bondage led;
O clothe thy word with sov'reign pow'r. [dead!
To break the rocks, and raise the

* Luke v. 4.

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5 Have mercy on our num'rous youth;
Who, young in years, are old in sin;
And by thy Spirit, and thy truth,
Show them the state their souls are in.

6 Then, by a Saviour's dying love
To ev'ry wounded heart reveal'd,
Temptations, fears, and guilt remove,
And be their Sun, and Strength, and Shield.

7 To mourners speak a cheering word,
On seeking souls vouchsafe to shine;
Let poor backsliders be restor'd,
And all thy saints in praises join.

8 O hear our pray'r, and give us hope,
That when thy voice shall call us home,
Thou still wilt raise a people up,
To love and praise thee in our room.

XI. C. *Pleading for and with Youth.*

1 Sin has undone our wretched race,
But Jesus has restor'd
And brought the sinner face to face
With his forgiving Lord.

2 This we repeat, from year to year,
And press upon our youth;
Lord, give them an attentive ear;
Lord, save them by thy truth.

3 Blessings upon the rising race!
Make this a happy hour,
According to thy richest grace,
And thine almighty pow'r.

4 We feel for your unhappy state,
(May you regard it too,)
And would a while ourselves forget
To pour out pray'r for you.

5 We see, though you perceive it not,
Th' approaching, awful doom;
O tremble at the solemn thought,
And flee the wrath to come!

6 Dear Saviour, let this new-born year
Spread an alarm abroad,
And cry, in ev'ry careless ear,
"Prepare to meet thy God!"

XII. C. *Prayer for Children.*

1 Gracious Lord, our children see,
By thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! remain,
Subjects still of Satan's reign:
Israel's young ones, when of old
Pharoah threaten'd to withhold;*
Then thy messenger said, "No;
"Let the children also go."

2 When the angel of the Lord,
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew, with an avenging hand,
All the first-born of the land;
Then thy people's doors he pass'd,
Where the bloody sign was plac'd;†
Hear us, now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

3 Lord, we tremble, for we know
How the fierce, malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread thy pinions, King of kings;
Hide them safe beneath thy wings;
Lest the rav'nous bird of prey
Stoop, and bear the brood away.

XIII. *The Shunamite.*‡

1 The Shunamite, oppress'd with grief,
When she had lost the son she lov'd,
Went to Elisha for relief,
Nor vain her application prov'd.

2 He sent his servant on before,
To lay a staff upon his head,
This he could do, but do no more;
He left him, as he found him, dead.

* Exodus x. 9. † Exodus xii. 13. ‡ 2 Kings iv. 31.

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3 But when the Lord's almighty pow'r
Wrought with the prophet's pray'r and faith,
The mother saw a joyful hour,
She saw her child restor'd from death.

4 Thus, like the weeping Shunamite,
For many dead in sin we grieve;
Now, Lord, display thine arm of might,
Cause them to hear thy voice and live.

5 Thy preachers bear the staff in vain,
Though at thine own command we go;
Lord, we have try'd and try'd again,
We find them dead, and leave them so.

6 Come then thyself—to ev'ry heart
The glory of thy name make known;
The means are our appointed part,
The pow'r and grace are thine alone.

XIV. *Elijah's Prayer.**

1 Does it not grief and wonder move,
To think of Israel's shameful fall?
Who needed miracles to prove
Whether the Lord was God, or Baal!

2 Methinks I see Elijah stand,
His features glow with love and zeal;
In faith and pray'r he lifts his hand,
And makes to Heav'n his great appeal.

3 "O God! if I thy servant am,
"If 'tis thy message fills my heart,
"Now glorify thy holy name,
"And show this people who thou art!"

4 He spake, and, lo! a sudden flame
Consum'd the wood, the dust, the stone;
The people struck, at once proclaim,
"The Lord is God, the Lord alone."

5 Like him, we mourn an awful day,
When more for Baal than God appear;
Like him, believers, let us pray,
And may the God of Israel hear!

6 Lord, if thy servant speak thy truth,
If he indeed is sent by thee;
Confirm the word to all our youth,
And let them thy salvation see.

7 Now may thy Spirit's holy fire
Pierce ev'ry heart that hears thy word,
Consume each hurtful, vain desire,
And make them know thou art the Lord.

XV. *Preaching to the dry Bones.†*

1 Preachers may from Ezekiel's case,
Draw hope in this declining day:
A proof, like this, of sov'reign grace
Should chase our unbelief away.

2 When sent to preach to mould'ring bones,
Who could have tho't he would succeed?
But well he knew the Lord from stones,
Could raise up Abr'ham's chosen seed.

3 Can these be made a num'rous host,
And such dry bones new life receive?
The prophet answer'd "Lord thou know'st
"They shall, if thou command-ment give."

4 Like him, around I cast my eye,
And, oh! what heaps of bones appear;
Like him, by Jesus sent, I'll try,—
For he can cause the dead to hear.

5 Hear, ye dry bones, the Saviour's word!
He, who when dying gasp'd, "Forgive!"
That gracious sinner-loving Lord,
Says, "Look to me, dry bones, and live."

* 1 Kings xviii.

† Ezek. xxxvii.

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6 Thou heav'nly wind awake and blow,
In answer to the pray'r of faith;
Now thine almighty influence show,
And fill dry bones with living breath.

7 O make them hear, and feel, and shake,
And, at thy call, obedient move;
The bonds of death and Satan break,
And bone to bone unite in love.

XVI. *The Rod of Moses.*

1 When Moses wav'd his mystic rod,
What wonders follow'd while he spoke!
Firm as a wall the waters stood,*
Or gush'd, in rivers, from the rock.†

2 At his command the thunders roll'd,
Lightning and hail his voice obey'd,‡
And Pharaoh trembled to behold
His land in desolation laid.

3 But what could Moses' rod have done,
Had he not been divinely sent?
The pow'r was from the Lord alone,
And Moses but the instrument.

4 O Lord, regard thy people's pray'rs!
Assist a worm to preach aright:
And, since thy Gospel rod he bears,
Display thy wonders in our sight.

5 Proclaim the thunders of thy law,
Like lightning let thine arrows fly,
That careless sinners, struck with awe,
For refuge may to Jesus cry.

6 Make streams of Godly sorrow flow,
From rocky hearts, unus'd to feel;
And let the poor in spirit know
That thou art near, their griefs to heal.

7 But chiefly, we would now look up
To ask a blessing for our youth,
The rising generations' hope,
That they may know and love thy truth.

8 Arise, O Lord, afford a sign, [tain;
Now shall our pray'rs success ob-
Since both the means and pow'r are thine,
How can the rod be rais'd in vain?

XVII. *God speaking from Mount Zion.*

1 The God who once to Israel spoke
From Sinai's top, in fire and smoke,
In gentler strains of Gospel grace
Invites us now to seek his face.

2 He wears no terrors on his brow,
He speaks, in love, from Zion now;
It is the voice of Jesus' blood
Calling poor wand'rers home to God.

3 The holy Moses quak'd and fear'd
When Sinai's thund'ring law he heard;
But reigning grace, with accents mild,
Speaks to the sinner as a child.

4 Hark! how from Calvary it sounds,
From the Redeemer's bleeding wounds!
"Pardon and grace I freely give,
"Poor sinner, look to me, and live."

5 What other arguments can move
The heart that slights a Saviour's love!
Yet, till almighty pow'r constrain,
This matchless love is preach'd in vain.

6 O Saviour, let that pow'r be felt,
And cause each stony heart to melt!
Deeply impress upon our youth
The light and force of Gospel truth.

7 With this new year may they begin
To live to thee, and die to sin;
To enter by the narrow way
Which leads to everlasting day.

8 How will they else thy presence bear
When, as a Judge, thou shalt appear!
When slighted love to wrath shall turn,
And the whole earth like Sinai burn!

* Exod. xiv. 21. † Numb. xx. 11. ‡ Exod. ix. 23.

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XVIII. *A Prayer for Power on the Means of Grace.*

1 O THOU, at whose almighty word
The glorious light from darkness sprung!
Thy quick'ning influence afford,
And clothe with pow'r the preacher's tongue.

2 Though 'tis thy truth he hopes to speak,
He cannot give the hearing ear;
'Tis thine the stubborn heart to break,
And make the careless sinner fear.

3 As when, of old, the water flow'd
Forth from the rock at thy command;*
Moses in vain had wav'd his rod,
Without thy wonder working hand.

4 As when the walls of Jericho,
Down to the earth at once were cast;†
It was thy pow'r that brought them low,
And not the trumpets' feeble blast.

5 Thus we would in the means be found,
And thus on thee alone depend;
To make the Gospel's joyful sound
Effectual to the promis'd end.

6 Now, while we hear thy word of Grace,
Let self and pride before it fall;
And rocky hearts dissolve apace,
In streams of sorrow at thy call.

7 On all our youth assembled here
The unction of thy Spirit pour;
Nor let them lose another year,
Lest thou shouldst strive and call no more.

XIX. *Elijah's Mantle.* 2 Kings, ii. 11—14.

1 ELISHA, struck with grief and awe,
Cry'd, "Ah! where now is Israel's stay?"
When he his honour'd master saw
Borne by a fiery car away.

2 But while he look'd a last adieu,
His mantle, as it fell, he caught;
The Spirit rested on him too,
And equal miracles he wrought.

3 "Where is Elijah's God?" he cry'd,
And with the mantle smote the flood;
His word controll'd the swelling tide,
Th' obedient waters upright stood.

4 The wonder-working Gospel thus,
From hand to hand has been convey'd;
We have the mantle still with us,
But where, O where the Spirit's aid.

5 When Peter first his mantle wav'd,‡
How soon it melted hearts of steel!
Sinners, by thousands, then were sav'd,
But now how few its virtues feel!

6 Where is Elijah's God, the Lord!
Thine Israel's hope, and joy, and boast!
Reveal thine arm, confirm thy word,
Give us another Pentecost!

7 Assist thy messenger to speak,
And, while he aims to lisp thy truth,
The bonds of sin and Satan break,
And pour thy blessing on our youth.

8 For them we now approach thy throne,
Teach them to know and love thy [name;
Then shall thy thankful people own
Elijah's God is still the same.

* Numbers xx. 11. † Joshua, vi. 20. ‡ Acts ii.

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HYMNS

AFTER SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, ON NEW-YEARS' EVENINGS, SUITED TO THE SUBJECTS.

XX. *David's Charge to Solomon.* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

1 O David's Son, and David's Lord!
From age to age thou art the same;
Thy gracious presence now afford,
And teach our youth to know thy name.

2 Thy people, Lord, though oft distrest,
Upheld by thee, thus far are come;
And now we long to see thy rest,
And wait thy word to call us home.

3 Like David, when this life shall end,
We trust in thee, sure peace to find;
Like him, to thee we now commend
The children we must leave behind.

4 Ere long, we hope to be where care,
And sin, and sorrow, never come;
But, oh! accept our humble pray'r
That these may praise thee in our room.

5 Show them how vile they are by sin,
And wash them in thy cleansing blood;
Oh! make them willing to be thine,
And be to them a cov'nant God.

6 Long may thy light and truth remain,
To bless this place when we are gone;
And numbers here be born again,
To dwell for ever near thy throne.

XXI. *The Lord's Call to his Children.* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

1 Let us adore the grace that seeks
To draw our hearts above!
Attend, 'tis God the Saviour speaks,
And ev'ry word is love.

2 Though fill'd with awe, before his throne
Each angel veils his face;
He claims a people for his own
Amongst our sinful race.

3 Careless a while they live in sin,
Enslav'd to Satan's pow'r;
But they obey the call divine,
In his appointed hour.

4 "Come forth," he says, "no more pursue
"The paths that lead to death;
"Look up, a bleeding Saviour view,
"Look, and be sav'd by faith.

5 "My sons and daughters you shall be
"Through the atoning blood;
"And you shall claim, and find in me
"A Father, and a God."

6 Lord, speak these words to ev'ry heart,
By thine all-pow'rful voice;
That we may now from sin depart,
And make thy love our choice.

7 If now we learn to seek thy face
By Christ, the living way, [grace,
We'll praise thee for this hour of
Through an eternal day.

XXII. *The Prayer of Jabez.* 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

1 Jesus, who bought us with his blood,
And makes our souls his care,
Was known of old as Israel's God,
And answer'd Jabez' pray'r.

2 Jabez! a child of grief! the name
Befits poor sinners well;
For Jesus bore the cross and shame,
To save our souls from hell.

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3 Teach us, O Lord, like him to plead
For mercies from above:
O come, and bless our souls indeed,
With light, and joy, and love.

4 The Gospel's promis'd land is wide,
We fain would enter in;
But we are press'd on ev'ry side
With unbelief and sin.

5 Arise, O Lord, enlarge our coast,
Let us possess the whole,
That Satan may no longer boast
He can thy work control.

6 Oh! may thy hand be with us still,
Our guide and guardian be,
To keep us safe from ev'ry ill,
Till death shall set us free.

7 Help us on thee to cast our care,
And on thy word to rest,
That Israel's God, who heareth pray'r,
Will grant us our request.

XXIII. *Waiting at Wisdom's Gates.* Prov. viii. 34, 35.

1 Ensnar'd too long my heart has been
In folly's hurtful ways;
Oh! may I now, at length, begin
To hear what Wisdom says!

2 'Tis Jesus, from the mercy-seat,
Invites me to his rest;
He calls poor sinners to his feet,
To make them truly blest.

3 Approach, my soul, to Wisdom's gates,
While it is call'd to-day;
No one who watches there, and waits,
Shall e'er be turn'd away.

4 He will not let me seek in vain;
For all who trust his word
Shall everlasting life obtain,
And favour from the Lord.

5 Lord, I have hated thee too long,
And dar'd thee to thy face;
I've done my soul exceeding wrong
In slighting all thy grace.

6 Now I would break my league with death,
And live to thee alone;
Oh! let thy Spirit's seal of faith
Secure me for thine own.

7 Let all the saints assembled here,
Yea, let all heav'n rejoice,
That I begin, with this new year,
To make the Lord my choice.

XXIV. *Asking the Way to Zion.* Jer. l. 5.

1 Zion, the city of our God,
How glorious is the place!
The Saviour there has his abode,
And sinners see his face!

2 Firm against ev'ry adverse shock,
Its mighty bulwarks prove;
'Tis built upon the living Rock,
And wall'd around with love.

3 There all the fruits of glory grow,
And joys that never die;
And streams of grace and knowledge flow,
The soul to satisfy.

4 Come, set your faces Zion-ward,
The sacred road inquire;
And let a union to the Lord
Be henceforth your desire.

5 The Gospel shines to give you light,
No longer, then, delay;
The Spirit waits to guide you right,
And Jesus is the way.

6 O Lord, regard thy people's pray'r,
Thy promise now fulfil;
And young and old, by grace prepare
To dwell on Zion's hill.

XXV. *We were Pharaoh's Bondmen.* Deut. vi. 20—23.

1 Beneath the tyrant Satan's yoke,
Our souls were long oppress;
Till grace our galling fetters broke,
And gave the weary rest.

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2 Jesus, in that important hour,
His mighty arm made known;
He ransom'd us by price and pow'r,
And claim'd us for his own.

3 Now, freed from bondage, sin, and death,
We walk in wisdom's ways;
And wish to spend our ev'ry breath
In wonder, love, and praise.

4 Ere long, we hope with him to dwell
In yonder world above;
And now we only live to tell
The riches of his love.

5 O might we, ere we hence remove,
Prevail upon our youth
To seek, that they may likewise prove
His mercy and his truth.

6 Like Simeon, we shall gladly go,*
When Jesus calls us home:
If they are left a seed below,
To serve him in our room.

7 Lord, hear our pray'r, indulge our hope,
On these thy Spirit pour,
That they may take our story up,
When we can speak no more.

XXVI. *Travailling in Birth for Souls.* Gal. iv. 19.

1 What contradictions meet
In minister's employ!
It is a bitter sweet,
A sorrow full of joy:
No other post affords a place
For equal honour or disgrace!

2 Who can describe the pain
Which faithful preachers feel,
Constrain'd to speak in vain,
To hearts as hard as steel!
Or who can tell the pleasures felt,
When stubborn hearts begin to melt!

3 The Saviour's dying love,
The soul's amazing worth,
Their utmost efforts move,
And draw their bowels forth:
They pray and strive, their rest departs,
Till Christ be form'd in sinners' hearts.

4 If some small hope appear,
They still are not content;
But with a jealous fear,
They watch for the event:
Too oft they find their hopes deceiv'd,
Then how their inmost souls are griev'd!

5 But when their pains succeed,
And from the tender blade
The rip'ning ears proceed,
Their toils are overpaid:
No harvest-joy can equal theirs,
To find the fruit of all their cares.

6 On what has now been sown,
Thy blessing, Lord bestow;
The pow'r is thine alone,
To make it spring and grow:
Do thou the gracious harvest raise,
And thou alone shalt have the praise.

XXVII. *We are Ambassadors for Christ.* 2 Cor. v. 20.

1 Thy message by the preacher seal,
And let thy pow'r be known,
That ev'ry sinner here may feel
The word is not his own.

2 Amongst the foremost of the throng,
Who dare thee to thy face,
He in rebellion stood too long,
And fought against thy grace.

3 But grace prevail'd, he mercy found,
And now by thee is sent,
To tell his fellow-rebels round,
And call them to repent.

4 In Jesus, God is reconcil'd,
The worst may be forgiv'n;
Come, and he'll own you as a child,
And make you heir of heav'n.

5 Oh! may the word of Gospel truth
Your chief desires engage!
And Jesus be your guide in youth,
Your joy in hoary age.

6 Perhaps the year that's now begun
May prove to some their last;
The sands of life may soon be run,
The day of grace be past.

* Luke ii. 29.

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7 Think, if you slight this embassy,
And will not warning take,
When Jesus in the clouds you see,
What answer will you make?

XXVIII. *Paul's Farewell Charge.* Acts xx. 26, 27.

1 When Paul was parted from his friends
It was a weeping day;
But Jesus made them all amends,
And wip'd their tears away.

2 Ere long they met again with joy,
Secure, no more to part,
Where praises ev'ry tongue employ,
And pleasure fills each heart.

3 Thus all the preachers of his grace
Their children soon shall meet;
Together see their Saviour's face,
And worship at his feet.

4 But they who heard the word in vain,
Though oft and plainly warn'd,
Will tremble when they meet again
The ministers they scorn'd.

5 On your own heads your blood will fall,
If any perish here;
The preachers who have told you all,
Shall stand approv'd and clear.

6 Yet, Lord, to save themselves alone,
Is not their utmost view; [own,
Oh! hear their pray'r, thy message
And save their hearers too.

XXIX. *How shall I put thee among the Children?* Jer. iii. 19.

1 Alas! by nature how deprav'd,
How prone to ev'ry ill!
Our lives to Satan how enslav'd,
How obstinate our will!

2 And can such sinners be restor'd,
Such rebels reconcil'd!
Can grace itself the means afford
To make a foe a child?

3 Yes, grace has found the wondrous means
Which shall effectual prove,
To cleanse us from our countless sins,
And teach our hearts to love.

4 Jesus for sinners undertakes,
And dy'd that they may live;
His blood a full atonement makes,
And cries aloud, "Forgive."

5 Yet one thing more must grace provide,
To bring us home to God, [dy'd,
Or we shall slight the Lord, who
And trample on his blood.

6 The Holy Spirit must reveal
The Saviour's work and worth;
Then the hard heart begins to feel
A new and heav'nly birth.

7 Thus bought with blood, and born again,
Redeem'd and sav'd by grace,
Rebels, in God's own house, obtain
A son's and daughter's place.

XXX. *Winter.**

1 See, how rude winter's icy hand
Has stripp'd the trees and seal'd the ground! [stand,
But spring shall soon his rage with-
And spread new beauties all around.

2 My soul a sharper winter mourns,
Barren and fruitless I remain;
When will the gentle spring return,
And bid my graces grow again?

3 Jesus, my glorious Sun, arise!
'Tis thine the frozen heart to move;
Oh! hush these storms, and clear my skies,
And let me feel thy vital love!

4 Dear Lord, regard my feeble cry,
I faint and droop till thou appear;
Wilt thou permit thy plant to die?
Must it be winter all the year?

* Book iii. Hymn 31.

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5 Be still, my soul, and wait this hour,
With humble pray'r, and patient faith;
Till he reveals his gracious pow'r,
Repose on what his promise saith.

6 He, by whose all-commanding word*
Seasons their changing course maintain,
In ev'ry change a pledge affords,
That none shall seek his face in vain.

XXXI. *Waiting for Spring.*

1 Though cloudy skies and northern blasts
Retard the gentle spring a while;
The sun will conqu'ror prove at last,
And nature wear a vernal smile.

2 The promise which from age to age,
Has brought the changing seasons round,
Again shall calm the winter's rage,
Perfume the air, and paint the ground.

3 The virtue of that first command,
I know still does and will prevail,
That while the earth itself shall stand,
The spring and summer shall not fail.

4 Such changes are for us decreed;
Believers have their winters too;
But spring shall certainly succeed,
And all their former life renew.

5 Winter and spring have each their use,
And each, in turn, his people know;
One kills the weeds their hearts produce,
The other makes their graces grow.

6 Though like dead trees a while they seem,
Yet having life within their root,
The welcome spring's reviving beam
Draws forth their blossoms, leaves, and fruit.

7 But if the tree indeed be dead,
It feels no change, though spring return;
Its leafless, naked, barren head,
Proclaims it only fit to burn.

8 Dear Lord, afford our souls a spring,
Thou know'st our winter has been long;
Shine forth and warm our hearts to sing,
And thy rich grace shall be our song.

XXXII. *Spring.*

1 Bleak winter is subdu'd at length,
And forc'd to yield the day;
The sun has wasted all his strength,
And driven him away.

2 And now long wish'd for spring is come,
How alter'd is the scene!
The trees and shrubs are dress'd in bloom,
The earth array'd in green.

3 Where'er we tread, beneath our feet
The clust'ring flowers spring;
The artless birds, in concert sweet,
Invite our hearts to sing.

4 But, ah! in vain I strive to join,
Oppress'd with sin and doubt;
I feel 'tis winter still within,
Though all is spring without.

5 Oh! would my Saviour, from on high,
Break through these clouds and shine!
No creature then more blest than I,
No song more loud than mine.

6 Till then—no softly-warbling thrush,
Nor cowslip's sweet perfume,
Nor beauties of each painted bush,
Can dissipate my gloom.

* Gen. viii. 22.

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7 To Adam, soon as he transgress'd,
Thus Eden bloom'd in vain:
Not Paradise could give him rest,
Or sooth his heart-felt pain.

8 Yet here an emblem I perceive
Of what the Lord can do!
Dear Saviour, help me to believe,
That I may flourish too.

9 Thy word can soon my hopes revive,
Can overcome my foes,
And make my languid graces thrive,
And blossom like the rose.

XXXIII. *Another.*

1 Pleasing spring again is here!
Trees and fields in bloom appear!
Hark! the birds, with artless lays,
Warble their Creator's praise!
Where, in winter, all was snow,
Now the flow'rs in clusters grow;
And the corn, in green array,
Promises a harvest day.

2 What a change has taken place!
Emblem of the spring of grace;
How the soul, in winter mourns,
Till the Lord, the Sun, returns;
Till the Spirit's gentle rain
Bids the heart revive again;
Then the stone is turn'd to flesh,
And each grace springs forth afresh.

3 Lord, afford a spring to me!
Let me feel like what I see!
Ah! my winter has been long,
Chill'd my hopes, and stopp'd my song!
Winter threaten'd to destroy
Faith, and love, and ev'ry joy;
If thy life was in the root,
Still I could not yield thee fruit.

4 Speak, and by thy gracious voice
Make my drooping soul rejoice;
O beloved Saviour, haste,
Tell me, all the storms are past:
On thy garden deign to smile,
Raise the plants, enrich the soil;
Soon thy presence will restore
Life to what seem'd dead before.

5 Lord, I long to be at home,
Where these changes never come!
Where the saints no winter fear,
Where 'tis spring throughout the year:
How unlike this state below!
There the flow'rs unwith'ring blow:
There no chilling blasts annoy;
All is love, and bloom, and joy.

XXXIV. *Summer Storms.**

1 Though the morn may be serene,
Not a threat'ning cloud be seen,
Who can undertake to say
'Twill be pleasant all the day?
Tempests suddenly may rise,
Darkness overspread the skies,
Lightnings flash, and thunders roar,
Ere a short-liv'd day be o'er.

2 Often thus the child of grace
Enters on his Christian race;
Guilt and fear are overborne,
'Tis with him a summer's morn;
While his new-felt joys abound,
All things seem to smile around;
And he hopes it will be fair
All the day, and all the year.

3 Should we warn him of a change,
He would think the caution strange;
He no change or trouble fears,
Till the gath'ring storm appears;†
Till dark clouds his sun conceal,
Till temptation's pow'r he feel;
Then he trembles and looks pale,
All his hopes and courage fail.

4 But the wonder-working Lord
Sooths the tempest by his word;
Stills the thunder, stops the rain,
And his sun breaks forth again:
Soon the cloud again returns,
Now he joys, and now he mourns;
Oft his sky is overcast,
Ere the day of life be past.

5 Try'd believers too can say,
In the course of one short day,
Though the morning has been fair,
Prov'd a golden hour of pray'r,
Sin and Satan, long ere night,
Have their comforts put to flight;
Ah! what heart-felt peace and joy
Unexpected storms destroy.

* Book iii. Hymn 68.

† Book i. Hymn 44.

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6 Dearest Saviour, call us soon
To thine high, eternal noon;
Never there shall tempest rise,
To conceal thee from our eyes:
Satan shall no more deceive,
We no more thy Spirit grieve;
But, through cloudless, endless days,
Sound, to golden harps, thy praise.

XXXV. *Hay-time.*

1 The grass, and flow'rs, which clothe the field,
And look so green and gay,
Touch'd by the scythe, defenceless yield,
And fall, and fade away.

2 Fit emblem of our mortal state!
Thus in the Scripture glass,
The young, the strong, the wise, the great,
May see themselves but grass.*

3 Ah! trust not to your fleeting breath,
Nor call your time your own;
Around you see the scythe of death
Is mowing thousands down.

4 And you, who hitherto are spar'd,
Must shortly yield your lives;
Your wisdom is, to be prepar'd
Before the stroke arrives.

5 The grass, when dead, revives no more;
You die to live again;
But, oh! if death should prove the door
To everlasting pain.

6 Lord, help us to obey thy call,
That, from our sins set free,
When like the grass our bodies fall,
Our souls may spring to thee.

XXXVI. *Harvest.*

1 See! the corn again in ear!
How the fields and vallies smile!
Harvest now is drawing near,
To repay the farmer's toil:
Gracious Lord, secure the crop,
Satisfy the poor with food:
In thy mercy is our hope,
We have sinn'd, but thou art good.

2 While I view the plenteous grain
As it ripens on the stalk,
May I not instruction gain,
Helpful to my daily walk?
All this plenty of the field
Was produc'd from foreign seeds;
For the earth itself would yield
Only crops of useless weeds.

3 Though, when newly sown, it lay
Hid a while beneath the ground,
(Some might think it thrown away,)
Now a large increase is found;
Though conceal'd, it was not lost,
Though it dy'd, it lives again;
Eastern storms, and nipping frosts,
Have oppos'd its growth in vain.

4 Let the praise be all the Lord's,
As the benefit is ours!
He, in season, still affords
Kindly heat, and gentle show'rs:
By his care the produce thrives,
Waving o'er the furrow'd lands;
And when harvest time arrives,
Ready for the reaper stands.

5 Thus in barren hearts he sows
Precious seeds of heav'nly joy;†
Sin and hell in vain oppose,
None can grace's crop destroy:
Threaten'd oft, though still it blooms,
After many changes past,
Death, the reaper, when he comes,
Finds it fully ripe at last.

CHRISTMAS.

XXXVII. *Praise for the Incarnation.*

1 Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in Immanuel's name;
All her hopes my spirit owes
To his birth, and cross, and shame.

* Isaiah, xl. 7. † Hosea, xiv. 7. Mark, iv. 26—29.

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2 When he came, the angels sung,
"Glory be to God on high;"
Lord, unloose my stamm'ring tongue,
Who should louder sing than I?

3 Did the Lord a man become,
That he might the law fulfil,
Bleed and suffer in my room,
And canst thou, my tongue, be still?

4 No, I must my praises bring,
Though they worthless are, and weak;
For should I refuse to sing,
Sure the very stones would speak.

5 O my Saviour, Shield, and Sun,
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend,
Ev'ry precious name is one,
I will love thee without end.

XXXVIII. C. *Jehovah-Jesus.*

1 My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to his abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great, supreme, the mighty God.

2 Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith, and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence.

3 As much, when in the manger laid,
Almighty Ruler of the sky,
As when the six days' work he made
Fill'd all the morning stars with joy.

4 Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is his dearest claim;
That gracious sound, well-pleas'd, he hears,
And owns Immanuel for his name.

5 A cheerful confidence I feel, [see:
My well plac'd hopes with joy I
My bosom glows with heav'nly zeal
To worship him who dy'd for me.

6 As man, he pities my complaint,
His pow'r and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, he cannot faint,
Salvation's sure, and must be mine.

XXXIX. *Man honoured above Angels.*

1 Now let us join with hearts and tongues,
And emulate the angels's songs;
Yea, sinners may address their King
In songs that angels cannot sing.

2 They praise the Lamb who once was slain,*
But we can add a higher strain;
Not only say, "He suffer'd thus,"
But that "he suffer'd all for us."

3 When angels, by transgression, fell,
Justice consign'd them all to hell;
But Mercy form'd a wondrous plan,
To save and honour fallen man.

4 Jesus, who pass'd the angels by,
Assum'd our flesh to bleed and die;†
And still he makes it his abode;
As man he fills the throne of God.

5 Our next of kin, our Brother now,
Is he to whom the angels bow;
They join with us to praise his name,
But we the nearest int'rest claim.

6 But, ah! how faint our praises rise!
Sure, 'tis the wonder of the skies,
That we, who share his richest love,
So cold and unconcern'd should prove.

7 Oh, glorious hour, it comes with speed! [freed,
When we, from sin and darkness
Shall see the God who dy'd for man,
And praise him more than angels can.‡

* Rev. v. † Heb. ii. 16. ‡ Book iii. Hymn 88.

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XL. *Saturday Evening.*

1 Safely through another week,
God has brought us on our way;
Let us now a blessing seek,
On th' approaching Sabbath-day;
Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest.

2 Mercies multiply'd each hour
Through the week our praise demand;
Guarded by Almighty pow'r,
Fed and guided by his hand:
Though ungrateful we have been,
Only made returns of sin.

3 While we pray for pard'ning grace,
Through the dear Redeemer's name,
Show thy reconciled face,
Shine away our sin and shame:
From our worldly care set free,
May we rest this night with thee.

4 When the morn shall bid us rise,
May we feel thy presence near!
May thy glory meet our eyes
When we in thy house appear!
There afford us, Lord, a taste
Of our everlasting feast.

5 May thy Gospel's joyful sound
Conquer sinners, comfort saints;
Make the fruits of grace abound,
Bring relief for all complaints:
Thus may all our Sabbaths prove,
Till we join the church above!

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

XLI. *Ebenezer.**

1 The Lord, our salvation and light,
The guide of our strength and our days,
Has brought us together to-night,
A new Ebenezer to raise:
The year we have now passed through,
His goodness with blessings has crown'd,
Each morning his mercies were new;
Then let our thanksgivings abound.

2 Encompass'd with dangers and snares,
Temptations, and fears, and complaints,
His ear he inclin'd to our pray'rs,
His hand open'd wide to our wants:
We never besought him in vain;
When burden'd with sorrow or sin,
He help'd us again and again,
Or where before now had we been?

3 His Gospel throughout the long year,
From Sabbath to Sabbath he gave;
How oft has he met with us here,
And shown himself mighty to save?
His candlestick has been remov'd
From churches once privileg'd thus;
But though we unworthy have prov'd,
It still is continu'd to us.

4 For so many mercies receiv'd,
Alas! what returns have we made?
His Spirit we often have griev'd,
And evil for good have repaid:
How well it becomes us to cry,
"Oh! who is a God like to thee?
"Who passest iniquities by,
"And plungest them deep in the sea!"

5 To Jesus, who sits on the throne,
Our best hallelujahs we bring:
To thee it is owing alone
That we are permitted to sing:
Assist us, we pray, to lament
The sins of the year that is past:
And grant that the next may be spent
Far more to thy praise than the last.

* 1 Sam. vii. 12.

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XLII. *Another.*

1 Let hearts and tongues unite,
And loud thanksgivings raise:
'Tis duty mingled with delight,
To sing the Saviour's praise.

2 To him we owe our breath,
He took us from the womb,
Which else had shut us up in death,
And prov'd an early tomb.

3 When on the breast we hung,
Our help was in the Lord;
'Twas he first taught our infant tongue
To form the lisping word.

4 When in our blood we lay,
He would not let us die,
Because his love had fix'd a day
To bring salvation nigh.

5 In childhood and in youth,
His eye was on us still;
Though strangers to his love and truth,
And prone to cross his will.

6 And since his name we knew,
How gracious has he been;
What dangers has he led us through,
What mercies have we seen!

7 Now through another year,
Supported by his care,
We raise our Ebenezer here,
"The Lord has help'd thus far."

8 Our lot in future years
Unable to foresee,
He, kindly, to prevent our fears,
Says, "Leave it all to me."

9 Yea, Lord, we wish to cast
Our cares upon thy breast!
Help us to praise thee for the past,
And trust thee for the rest.

II. ORDINANCES.

XLIII. *On opening a Place for Social Prayer.*

1 O Lord, our languid souls inspire,
For here, we trust, thou art!
Send down a coal of heav'nly fire,
To warm each waiting heart.

2 Dear Shepherd of thy people, hear,
Thy presence now display;
As thou hast giv'n a place for pray'r,
So give us hearts to pray.

3 Show us some token of thy love,
Our fainting hope to raise;
And pour thy blessings from above,
That we may render praise.

4 Within these walls let holy peace,
And love, and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease,
The wounded spirit heal.

5 The feeling heart, the melting eye,
The humbled mind bestow:
And shine upon us from on high,
To make our graces grow!

6 May we in faith receive thy word,
In faith present our pray'rs;
And, in the presence of our Lord,
Unbosom all our cares.

7 And may the Gospel's joyful sound,
Enforc'd by mighty grace,
Awaken many sinners round,
To come and fill the place.

XLIV. C. *Another.*

1 Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
And ev'ry place is hallow'd ground.

2 For thou, within no walls confin'd,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring thee where they come,
And going, take thee to their home.

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3 Dear Shepherd of thy chosen few,
Thy former mercies here renew;
Here, to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of thy saving name.

4 Here may we prove the pow'r of pray'r,
To strengthen faith and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heav'n before our eyes.

5 Behold, at thy commanding word,
We stretch the curtain and the cord;*
Come thou, and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase.

6 Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
Nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
Oh! rend the heav'ns, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts thine own!

XLV. *The Lord's Day.*

1 How welcome to the saints when press'd
With six days' noise, and care, and toil,
Is the returning day of rest,
Which hides them from the world a while!

2 Now from the throng withdrawn away,
They seem to breathe a diff'rent air;
Compos'd and soften'd by the day,
All things another aspect wear.

3 How happy, if their lot is cast
Where statedly the Gospel sounds!
The word is honey to their taste,
Renews their strength, and heals their wounds!

4 Though pinch'd with poverty at home,
With sharp afflictions daily fed,
It makes amends, if they can come
To God's own house for heavenly bread!

5 With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met;
And while they feast upon his grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget.

6 This favour'd lot, my friends, is ours,
May we the privilege improve,
And find these consecrated hours
Sweet earnests of the joys above!

7 We thank thee for thy day, O Lord:
Here we thy promis'd presence seek;
Open thine hand, with blessings stor'd,
And give us manna for the week.

XLVI. *Gospel Privileges.*

1 O HAPPY they who know the Lord,
With whom he deigns to dwell!
He feeds and cheers them by his word,
His arm supports them well.

2 To them, in each distressing hour,
His throne of grace is near;
And when they plead his love and pow'r,
He stands engag'd to hear.

3 He help'd his saints, in ancient days,
Who trusted in his name;
And we can witness, to his praise,
His love is still the same.

4 Wand'ring in sin, our souls he found,
And bid us seek his face;
Gave us to hear the Gospel sound,
And taste the Gospel grace.

5 Oft in his house his glory shines,
Before our wond'ring eyes;
We wish not then for golden mines,
Or aught beneath the skies.

6 His presence sweetens all our cares,
And makes our burdens light;
A word from him dispels our fears,
And gilds the gloom of night.

* Isaiah, liv. 2.

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7 Lord, we expect to suffer here,
Nor would we dare repine;
But give us still to find thee near,
And own us still for thine.

8 Let us enjoy and highly prize
These tokens of thy love,
Till thou shalt bid our spirits rise,
To worship thee above.

XLVII. *Another.*

1 Happy are they to whom the Lord
His gracious name makes known!
And by his Spirit, and his word,
Adopts them for his own!

2 He calls them to his mercy-seat,
And hears their humble pray'r!
And when within his house they meet,
They find his presence near.

3 The force of their united cries
No pow'r can long withstand;
For Jesus helps them from the skies:
By his almighty hand.

4 Then mountains sink at once to plains,
And light from darkness springs;
Each seeming loss improves their gains,
Each trouble comfort brings.

5 Though men despise them or revile,
They count their trial small;
Whoever frowns, if Jesus smile,
It makes amends for all.

6 Though meanly clad, and coarsely fed,
And, like their Saviour, poor,
They would not change their Gospel bread
For all the worldling's store.

7 When cheer'd with faith's sublimer joys,
They mount on eagles' wings;
They can disdain, as children's toys,
The pride and pomp of kings.

8 Dear Lord, assist our souls to pay
The debt of praise we owe,
That we enjoy a Gospel day,
And heav'n begun below.

XLVIII. *Praise for the Continuance of the Gospel.**

1 Once, while we aim'd at Zion's songs,
A sudden mourning check'd our tongues!
Then we were call'd to sow in tears
The seeds of joy for future years.

2 Oft as that memorable hour
The changing year brings round again,
We meet to praise the love and pow'r
Which heard our cries, and eas'd our pain.

3 Come, ye who trembled for the ark,
Unite in praise for answer'd pray'r!
Did not the Lord our sorrows mark?
Did not our sighing reach his ear?

4 Then smaller griefs were laid aside,
And all our cares summ'd up in one;
"Let us but have thy word," we cry'd,
"In other things thy will be done."

5 Since he has granted our request,
And we still hear the Gospel voice;
Although by many trials prest,
In this we can and will rejoice.

6 Though to our lot temptations fall,
Though pain, and want, and cares annoy;
The precious Gospel sweetens all,
And yields us med'cine, food, and joy.

* Wherever a separation is threatened between a minister and people who dearly love each other, this hymn may be as seasonable as it was once in Olney.

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XLIX. *A Famine of the Word.*

1 Gladness was spread through Israel's host
When first they manna view'd;
They labour'd who should gather most,
And thought it pleasant food.

2 But when they had it long enjoy'd,
From day to day the same,
Their hearts were by the plenty cloy'd,
Although from heav'n it came.

3 Thus Gospel bread at first is priz'd,
And makes a people glad;
But afterwards too much despis'd,
When easy to be had.

4 But should the Lord, displeas'd, withhold
The bread his mercy sends;
To have our houses fill'd with gold
Would make but poor amends.

5 How tedious would the week appear,
How dull the Sabbath prove,
Could we no longer meet to hear
The precious truths we love?

6 How would believing parents bear
To leave their heedless youth
Expos'd to ev'ry fatal snare,
Without the light of truth.

7 The Gospel, and a praying few,
Our bulwark long have prov'd;
But Olney sure the day will rue
When these shall be remov'd.

8 Then sin, in this once favour'd town,
Will triumph unrestrain'd;
And wrath and vengeance hasten down,
No more by pray'r detain'd.

9 Preserve us from this judgment, Lord,
For Jesus' sake we plead;
A famine of the Gospel word
Would be a stroke indeed!

L. *Prayer for Ministers.*

1 Chief Shepherd of thy chosen sheep,
From death and sin set free;
May ev'ry under Shepherd keep
His eye intent on thee!

2 With plenteous grace their hearts prepare
To execute thy will; [care,
Compassion, patience, love, and
And faithfulness, and skill.

3 Inflame their minds with holy zeal
Their flocks to feed and teach;
And let them live, and let them feel
The sacred truths they preach.

4 Oh! never let the sheep complain
That toys, which fools amuse,
Ambition, pleasure, praise, or gain
Debase the shepherd's views.

5 He that for these forbears to feed
The souls whom Jesus loves,
Whate'er he may profess or plead,
An idol-shepherd proves.*

6 The sword of God shall break his arm,
A blast shall blind his eye;
His word shall have no pow'r to warm,
His gifts shall all grow dry.

7 O Lord, avert this heavy woe,
Let all thy shepherds say!
And grace and strength on each bestow
To labour while 'tis day.

* Zechariah, xi. 17.

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LI. *Prayer for a Revival.*

1 Saviour, visit thy plantation,
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless thou return again:
Keep no longer at a distance,
Shine upon us from on high;
Lest, for want of thine assistance,
Ev'ry plant should droop and die.

2 Surely, once thy garden flourish'd,
Ev'ry part look'd gay and green;
Then thy word our spirits nourish'd,
Happy seasons we have seen!
But a drought has since succeeded,
And a sad decline we see;
Lord, thy help is greatly needed;
Help can only come from thee.

3 Where are those we counted leaders,
Fill'd with zeal, and love, and truth?
Old professors, tall as cedars,
Bright examples to our youth!
Some, in whom we once delighted,
We shall meet no more below;
Some, alas! we fear are blighted,
Scarce a single leaf they show.

4 Younger plants—the sight how pleasant,
Cover'd thick with blossoms stood;
But they cause us grief at present,
Frosts have nipp'd them in the bud!
Dearest Saviour, hasten hither,
Thou canst make them bloom again;
Oh, permit them not to wither,
Let not all our hopes be vain!

5 Let our mutual love be fervent,
Make us prevalent in pray'r;
Let each one, esteem'd thy servant,
Shun the world's bewitching snares;
Break the tempter's fatal power,
Turn the stony heart to flesh;
And begin from this good hour,
To revive thy work afresh.

LII. *Hoping for a Revival.*

1 My harp untun'd, and laid aside,
(To cheerful hours the harp belongs,)
My cruel foes, insulting, cry'd,
"Come, sing us one of Zion's songs."

2 Alas! when sinners, blindly bold,
At Zion scoff, and Zion's King;
When zeal declines, and love grows cold,
Is this a day for me to sing?

3 Time was, whene'er the saints I met,
With joy and praise my bosom glow'd;
But now, like Eli, sad I sit,
And tremble for the ark of God.

4 While thus to grief my soul gave way,
To see the work of God decline,
Methought I heard my Saviour say,
"Dismiss thy fears, the ark is mine.

5 "Though for a time I hide my face,
"Rely upon my love and pow'r;
"Still wrestle at a throne of grace,
"And wait for a reviving hour.

6 "Take down thy long neglected harp, [pray'r;
"I've seen thy tears and heard thy
"The winter season has been sharp,
"But spring shall all its wastes repair."

7 Lord, I obey; my hopes revive;
Come join with me, ye saints, and sing;
Our foes in vain against us strive,
For God will help and healing bring.

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SACRAMENTAL HYMNS.

LIII. C. *Welcome to the Table.*

1 This is the feast of heav'nly wine,
And God invites to sup:
The juices of the living vine
Were press'd, to fill the cup.

2 Oh! bless the Saviour, ye that eat,
With royal dainties fed;
Not heav'n affords a costlier treat,
For Jesus is the bread.

3 The vile, the lost, he calls to them,
Ye trembling souls, appear!
The righteous in their own esteem
Have no acceptance here.

4 Approach, ye poor, nor dare refuse
The banquet spread for you:
Dear Saviour, this is welcome news,
Then I may venture too.

5 If guilt and sin afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see his face.

LIV. *Christ crucified.*

1 When on the cross my Lord I see,
Bleeding to death for wretched me,
Satan and sin no more can move,
For I am all transform'd to love.

2 His thorns and nails pierce thro' my heart;
In ev'ry groan I bear a part; [eyes;
I view his wounds with streaming
But see! he bows his head and dies!

3 Come sinners, view the Lamb of God,
Wounded, and dead, and bath'd in blood!
Behold his side, and venture near,
The well of endless life is here.

4 Here I forget my cares and pains;
I drink, yet still my thirst remains;
Only the fountain head above
Can satisfy the thirst of love.

5 Oh, that I thus could always feel!
Lord, more and more thy love reveal! [proclaim
Then my glad tongue shall loud
The grace and glory of thy name.

6 Thy name dispels my guilt and fear,
Revives my heart, and charms my ear;
Affords a balm for ev'ry wound,
And Satan trembles at the sound.

LV. C. *Jesus hasting to suffer.*

1 The Saviour, what a noble flame
Was kindled in his breast,
When, hasting to Jerusalem,
He march'd before the rest!

2 Good-will to men, and zeal for God,
His ev'ry thought engross;
He longs to be baptiz'd with blood,*
He pants to reach the cross.

3 With all his suff'rings full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task his spirit flew,
'Twas love that urg'd him on.

4 Lord, we return thee what we can!
Our hearts shall sound abroad,
Salvation, to the dying Man,
And to the rising God!

5 And while thy bleeding glories here
Engage our wond'ring eyes,
We learn our lighter cross to bear,
And hasten to the skies.

* Luke xii. 50.

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LVI. *It is good to be here.*

1 Let me dwell on Golgotha,
Weep and love my life away!
While I see him on the tree,
Weep, and bleed, and die for me!

2 That dear blood, for sinners spilt,
Shows my sin in all its guilt:
Ah, my soul, he bore thy load;
Thou hast slain the Lamb of God!

3 Hark! his dying word, "Forgive,
"Father, let the sinner live;
"Sinner, wipe thy tears away,
"I thy ransom freely pay."

4 While I hear this grace reveal'd,
And obtain a pardon seal'd,
All my soft affections move,
Weaken'd by the force of love.

5 Farewell, world, thy gold is dross,
Now I see the bleeding cross;
Jesus dy'd to set me free
From the law, and sin, and thee!

6 He has dearly bought my soul;
Lord, accept, and claim the whole;
To thy will I all resign,
Now no more my own, but thine.

LVII. *Looking at the Cross.*

1 In evil long I took delight,
Unaw'd by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career.

2 I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

3 Sure, never till my latest breadth
Can I forget that look; [death,
It seem'd to charge me with his
Though not a word he spoke.

4 My conscience felt, and own'd the guilt,
And plung'd me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there.

5 Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain.

6 A second look he gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive:
"This blood is for thy ransom paid,
"I die, that thou mayst live."

7 Thus, while his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace,)
It seals my pardon too.

8 With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by him I kill'd.

LVIII. *Supplies in the Wilderness.*

1 When Israel, by divine command,
The pathless desert trod,
They found, tho' 'twas a barren land,
A sure resource in God.

2 A cloudy pillar mark'd their road,
And screen'd them from the heat;
From the hard rocks the water flow'd,
And manna was their meat.

3 Like them, we have a rest in view,
Secure from adverse pow'rs;
Like them, we pass the desert too,
But Israel's God is ours.

4 Yes, in this barren wilderness
He is to us the same,
By his appointed means of grace,
As once he was to them.

5 His word a light before us spreads,
By which our path we see;
His love, a banner o'er our heads,
From harm preserves us free.

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6 Jesus, the bread of life, is giv'n
To be our daily food; [heav'n,
We drink a wondrous stream from
'Tis water, wine, and blood.

7 Lord, 'tis enough, I ask no more,
These blessings are divine;
I envy not the worldling's store,
If Christ and heav'n are mine.

LIX. *Communion with the Saints in Glory.*

1 REFRESHED by the bread and wine,
The pledges of our Saviour's love,
Now let our hearts and voices join
In songs of praise with those above.

2 Do they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb?"
Although we cannot reach their strains, [same,
Yet we, through grace, can sing the
For us he dy'd, for us he reigns.

3 If they behold him face to face,
While we a glimpse can only see;
Yet equal debtors to his grace,
As safe and as belov'd are we.

4 They had, like us, a suff'ring time,
Our cares, and fears, and griefs they knew: [him,
But they have conquer'd all through
And we, ere long, shall conquer too.

5 Though all the songs of saints in light [worth,
Are far beneath his matchless
His grace is such, he will not slight
The poor attempts of worms on earth.

ON PRAYER.

LX. C. *Exhortation to Prayer.*

1 WHAT various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of pray'r,
But wishes to be often there.

2 Pray'r makes the darken'd cloud withdraw,
Pray'r climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings ev'ry blessing from above.

3 Restraining pray'r, we cease to fight;
Pray'r makes the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

4 While MOSES stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when, through weariness, they fail'd,
That moment Amalek prevail'd.*

5 Have you no words? ah! think again, [plain,
Words flow apace when you com-
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

6 Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heav'n in supplication sent,
Your cheerful songs would oft'ner be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."

LXI. *Power of Prayer.*

1 IN themselves, as weak as worms,
How can poor believers stand,
When temptations, foes, and storms,
Press them close on ev'ry hand?

2 Weak, indeed, they feel they are,
But they know the throne of grace,
And the God who answers pray'r
Helps them when they seek his face.

3 Though the Lord a while delay,
Succour they at length obtain;
He who taught their hearts to pray,
Will not let them cry in vain.

* Exod. xvii. 11.

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4 Wrestling pray'r can wonders do,
Bring relief in deepest straits;
Pray'r can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates.

5 Hezekiah, on his knees,
Proud Assyria's host subdu'd;
And, when smitten with disease,
Had his life, by pray'r renew'd.

6 Peter, though confin'd and chain'd,
Pray'r prevail'd and brought him out;
When Elijah pray'd, it rain'd,
After three long years of drought.

7 We can likewise witness bear,
That the Lord is still the same;
Though we fear'd he would not hear,
Suddenly deliv'rance came.

8 For the wonders he has wrought,
Let us now our praises give;
And, by sweet experience taught,
Call upon him while we live.

ON THE SCRIPTURE.

LXII. C. *The Light and Glory of the Word.*

1 The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light.

2 A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to ev'ry age,
It gives, but borrows none.

3 The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise, but never set.

4 Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heav'nly day.

5 My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of him I love;
Till glory breaks upon my view
In brighter worlds above.

LXIII. *The Word more precious than Gold.*

1 Precious Bible! what a treasure
Does the word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and Med'cine, Shield and Sword:
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more.

2 Food, to which the world's a stranger,
Here my hungry soul enjoys;
Of excess there is no danger,
Though it fills, it never cloys:
On a dying Christ I feed,
He is meat and drink indeed!

3 When my faith is faint and sickly,
Or when Satan wounds my mind,
Cordials to revive me quickly,
Healing Med'cines here I find;
To the promises I flee,
Each affords a remedy.

4 In the hour of dark temptation
Satan cannot make me yield;
For the word of consolation
Is to me a mighty Shield:
While the Scripture-truths are sure,
From his malice I'm secure.

5 Vain his threats to overcome me,
When I take the Spirit's sword;
Then, with ease, I drive him from me,
Satan trembles at the word:
'Tis a Sword for conquest made,
Keen the edge, and strong the blade.

6 Shall I envy, then, the miser,
Doating on his golden store?
Sure I am, or should be, wiser;
I am rich, 'tis he is poor:
Jesus gives me, in his word,
Food and Med'cine, Shield and Sword.

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III. PROVIDENCES.

LXIV. *On the Commencement of Hostilities in America.*

1 The gath'ring clouds with aspect dark,
A rising storm presage;
Oh! to be hid within the ark,
And shelter'd from its rage!

2 See the commission'd angel frown!*
That vial in his hand, [down
Fill'd with fierce wrath, is pouring
Upon our guilty land!

3 Ye saints, unite in wrestling pray'r,
If yet there may be hope;
Who knows but mercy yet may spare,
And bid the angel stop?†

4 Already is the plague begun,‡
And, fir'd with hostile rage,
Brethren, by blood and int'rest one,
With brethren now engage.

5 Peace spreads her wings, prepar'd for flight,
And war, with flaming sword
And hasty strides, draws nigh, to fight
The battles of the Lord.

6 The first alarm, alas! how few,
While distant, seem to hear!
But they will hear, and tremble too,
When God shall send it near.

7 So thunder, o'er the distant hills,
Gives but a murm'ring sound;
But as the tempest spreads, it fills
And shakes the welkin§ round.

8 May we, at least, with one consent,
Fall low before the throne;
With tears the nation's sins lament,
The church's, and our own.

9 The humble souls who mourn and pray,
The Lord approves and knows;
His mark secures them in the day
When vengeance strikes his foes.

FAST-DAY HYMNS.

LXV. *Confession and Prayer.* Dec. 13, 1776.

1 Oh! may the pow'r which melts the rock
Be felt by all assembled here!
Or else our service will but mock
The God whom we profess to fear.

2 Lord, while thy judgments shake the land, [thee!
Thy people's eyes are fix'd on
We own thy just, uplifted hand,
Which thousands cannot, will not see.

3 How long hast thou bestow'd thy care
On this indulg'd ungrateful spot;
While other nations, far and near,
Have envi'd and admir'd our lot.

4 Here peace and liberty have dwelt,
The glorious Gospel brightly shone;
And oft our enemies have felt
That God has made our cause his own.

5 But, ah! both heav'n and earth have heard
Our vile requital of his love!
We, whom like children he has rear'd,
Rebels against his goodness prove.‖

6 His grace despis'd, his pow'r defy'd,
And legions of the blackest crimes,
Profaneness, riot, lust, and pride,
Are signs that mark the present times.

7 The Lord, displeas'd, has rais'd his rod;
Ah! where are now the faithful few
Who tremble for the ark of God,
And know what Israel ought to do?¶

* Rev. xvi. 1. † 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. ‡ Num. xvi. 46. § Firmament, or Atmosphere.
‖ Isa. i. 2. ¶ 1 Chron. xii. 32.

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8 Lord, hear thy people ev'ry where,
Who meet to mourn, confess, and pray;
The nation and thy churches spare,
And let thy wrath be turn'd away.

LXVI. *Moses and Amalek.** Feb. 27, 1778.

1 While Joshua led the armed bands
Of Israel forth to war,
Moses, apart, with lifted hands,
Engag'd in humble pray'r.

2 The armed bands had quickly fail'd,
And perish'd in the fight,
If Moses' pray'r had not prevail'd
To put the foes to flight.

3 When Moses' hands thro' weakness dropp'd,
The warriors fainted too;
Israel's success at once was stopp'd,
And Am'lek bolder grew.

4 A people, always prone to boast,
Were taught, by this suspense,
That not a num'rous arm ed host,
But God, was their defence.

5 We now of fleets and armies vaunt,
And ships and men prepare;
But men like Moses most we want,
To save the state by pray'r.

6 Yet, Lord, we hope thou hast prepar'd
A hidden few to-day, [guard,)
(The nation's secret strength and
To weep, and mourn, and pray.

7 O hear their pray'rs and grant us aid,
Bid war and discord cease;
Heal the sad breach which sin has made,
And bless us all with peace.

LXVII. *The Hiding Place.* Feb. 10, 1779.

1 See the gloomy gath'ring cloud,
Hanging o'er a sinful land!
Sure the Lord proclaims aloud,
Times of trouble are at hand:
Happy they who love his name!
They shall always find him near;
Though the earth were wrapp'd in flame,
They have no just cause for fear.

2 Hark, his voice in accents mild,
(Oh, how comforting and sweet!)
Speaks to ev'ry humble child,
Pointing out a sure retreat!
"Come, and in my chambers hide,†
"To my saints of old well known;
"There you safely may abide
"Till the storm be overblown.

3 "You have only to repose
"On my wisdom, love and care;
"When my wrath consumes my foes,
"Mercy shall my children spare;
"While they perish in the flood,
"You that bear my holy mark,‡
"Sprinkled with atoning blood,
"Shall be safe within the ark."

4 Sinners, see the ark prepar'd!
Haste to enter while there's room;
Though the Lord his arm has bar'd,
Mercy still retards your doom:
Seek him while there yet is hope,
Ere the day of grace be past,
Lest in wrath he give you up,
And this call shall be your last.

LXVIII. *On the Earthquake.* Sept. 8, 1775.

1 Although on massy pillars built,
The earth has lately shook;
It trembles under Britain's guilt,
Before its Maker's look.

2 Swift as the shock amazement spreads,
And sinners tremble too; [heads,
What flight can screen their guilty
If earth itself pursue?

* Exod. xvii. 9. † Isa. xxvi. 20. ‡ Ezek. ix. 4.

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3 But mercy spar'd us while it warn'd,
The shock is felt no more;
And mercy, now, alas! is scorn'd
By sinners, as before.

4 But if these warnings prove in vain,
Say, sinner, canst thou tell
How soon the earth may quake again,
And open wide to hell.

5 Repent before the Judge draws nigh;
Or else, when he comes down,
Thou wilt in vain for earthquakes cry,
To hide thee from his frown.*

6 But happy they who love the Lord,
And his salvation know;
The hope that's founded on his word
No change can overthrow.

7 Should the deep-rooted hills be hurl'd,
And plung'd beneath the seas,
And strong convulsions shake the world,
Your hearts may rest in peace.

8 Jesus, your Shepherd, Lord, and Chief,
Shall shelter you from ill;
And not a worm or shaking leaf
Can move, but at his will.

LXIX. *On the Fire at Olney.* Sept. 22, 1777.

1 Wearı'd by day with toil and cares,
How welcome is the peaceful night!
Sweet sleep our wasted strength repairs,
And fits us for returning light.

2 Yet when our eyes in sleep are clos'd,
Our rest may break ere well begun;
To dangers ev'ry hour expos'd,
We neither can foresee nor shun.

3 'Tis of the Lord that we can sleep
A single night without alarms;
His eye alone our lives can keep
Secure amidst a thousand harms.

4 For months and years of safety past
Ungrateful we, alas! have been;
Though, patient long, he spoke at last,
And bid the fire rebuke our sin.

5 The shout of fire! dreadful cry,
Impress'd each heart with deep dismay;
While the fierce blaze and redd'ning sky
Made midnight wear the face of day.

6 The throng and terror who can speak?
The various sounds that fill'd the air!
The infant's wail, the mother's shriek,
The voice of blasphemy and pray'r.

7 But pray'r prevail'd, and sav'd the town;
The few who lov'd the Saviour's name
Were heard, and mercy hasted down,
To change the wind, and stop the flame.

8 Oh, may that night be ne'r forgot!
Lord, still increase thy praying few!
Were Olney left without a Lot,
Ruin, like Sodom's would ensue.

LXX. *A Welcome to Christian Friends.*

1 Kindred in Christ, for his dear sake,
A hearty welcome here receive;
May we together now partake
The joys which only he can give!

2 To you and us, by grace, 'tis giv'n
To know the Saviour's precious name;
And shortly we shall meet in heav'n,
Our hope, our way, our end, the same.

* Rev. vi. 16.

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3 May he, by whose kind care we meet,
Send his good Spirit from above,
Make our communications sweet,
And cause our hearts to burn with love!

4 Forgotten be each worldly theme,
When Christians see each other thus;
We only wish to speak of him
Who liv'd, and dy'd, and reigns for us.

5 We'll talk of all he did, and said,
And suffer'd, for us here below;
The path he mark'd for us to tread,
And what he's doing for us now.

6 Thus, as the moments pass away,
We'll love, and wonder, and adore;
And hasten on the glorious day,
When we shall meet to part no more.

LXXI. *At Parting.*

1 As the sun's enliv'ning eye
Shines on ev'ry place the same;
So the Lord is always nigh
To the souls that love his name.

2 When they move at duty's call,
He is with them by the way;
He is ever with them all,
Those who go, and those who stay.

3 From his holy mercy-seat
Nothing can their souls confine;
Still in spirit they may meet,
And in sweet communion join.

4 For a season call'd to part,
Let us then ourselves commend
To the gracious eye and heart
Of our ever-present Friend.

5 Jesus, hear our humble pray'r!
Tender Shepherd of thy sheep!
Let thy mercy and thy care
All our souls in safety keep.

6 In thy strength may we be strong,
Sweeten ev'ry cross and pain;
Give us, if we live, ere long,
Here to meet in peace again.

7 Then, if thou thy help afford,
Ebenezers shall be rear'd;
And our souls shall praise the Lord,
Who our poor petitions heard.

FUNERAL HYMNS.

LXXII. *On the Death of a Believer.*

1 In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saints,
When yielding up their breath.

2 One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, "They're gone!"
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

3 Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her in her flight:
No eye can pierce within the vail
Which hides that world of light.

4 Thus much (and this is all) we know,
They are completely blest;
Have done with sin, and care, and wo,
And with their Saviour rest.

5 On harps of gold they praise his name,
His face they always view:
Then let us follow'rs be of them,
That we may praise him too.

6 Their faith and patience, love and zeal,
Should make their mem'ry dear;
And, Lord, do thou the pray'rs fulfil
They offer'd for us here!

7 While they have gain'd, we losers are,
We miss them day by day;
But thou canst ev'ry breach repair,
And wipe our tears away.

8 We pray, as in Elisha's case,
When great Elijah went,
May double portions of thy grace,
To us who stay, be sent.

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LXXIII. C. *On the Death of a Minister.*

1 His master taken from his head,
Elisha saw him go;
And, in desponding accents, said,
"Ah, what must Israel do!"

2 But he forgot the Lord, who lifts
The beggar to the throne;
Nor knew that all Elijah's gifts
Would soon be made his own.

3 What! when a Paul has run his course;
Or when Apollos dies,
Is Israel left without resource,
And have we no supplies?

4 Yes, while the dear Redeemer lives,
We have a boundless store,
And shall be fed with what he gives,
Who lives for evermore.

LXXIV. *The tolling Bell.*

1 Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul,
Let each one ask himself, "Am I
"Prepar'd, should I be call'd, to die?"

2 Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death;
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plung'd into a world unknown.

3 Then, leaving all I lov'd below,
To God's tribunal I must go; [fate,
Must hear the Judge pronounce my
And fix my everlasting state.

4 But could I bear to hear him say,
"Depart, accursed, far away!
"With Satan, in the lowest hell,
"Thou art for ever doom'd to dwell."

5 Lord Jesus, help me now to flee,
And seek my hope alone in thee;
Apply thy blood, thy Spirit give,
Subdue my sin, and let me live.

6 Then when the solemn bell I hear,
If sav'd from guilt, I need not fear;
Nor would the thought distressing be,
Perhaps it next may toll for me.

7 Rather, my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish to hear thy voice;
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heav'n if thou art mine.

LXXV. *Hope beyond the Grave.*

1 My soul, this curious house of clay,
Thy present frail abode,
Must quickly fall to worms a prey,
And thou return to God.

2 Canst thou, by faith, survey with joy
The change before it come?
And say, "Let death this house destroy,
"I have a heav'nly home!"

3 The Saviour, whom I then shall see
With new admiring eyes,
Already has prepar'd, for me,
A mansion in the skies.*

4 I feel this mud-wall'd cottage shake,
And long to see it fall;
That I my willing flight may take
To him who is my all.

5 Burden'd and groaning then no more,
My rescu'd soul shall sing,
As up the shining path I soar,
"Death, thou hast lost thy sting."

6 Dear Saviour, help us now to seek,
And know thy grace's pow'r;
That we may all this language speak,
Before the dying hour.

LXXVI. *There the Weary are at Rest.*

1 Courage, my soul! behold the prize
The Saviour's love provides;
Eternal life beyond the skies
For all whom here he guides.

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

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2 The wicked cease from troubling there,
The weary are at rest;*
Sorrow, and sin, and pain, and care,
No more approach the blest.

3 A wicked world, and wicked heart,
With Satan now are join'd;
Each acts a too successful part
In harassing my mind.

4 In conflict with this threefold troop,
How weary, Lord, am I!
Did not thy promise bear me up,
My soul must faint and die.

5 But fighting in my Saviour's strength,
Though mighty are my foes,
I shall a conqu'ror be, at length,
O'er all that can oppose.

6 Then why, my soul, complain or fear?
The crown of glory see!
The more I toil and suffer here,
The sweeter rest will be.

LXXVII. *The Day of Judgment.*

1 Day of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark! the trumpet's awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round!
How the summons will the sinner's heart confound!

2 See the Judge, our nature wearing,
Cloth'd in majesty divine!
You who long for his appearing,
Then shall say, "This God is mine!"
Gracious Saviour, own me in that day [for thine!

3 At his call the dead awaken,
Rise to life from earth and sea:
All the pow'rs of nature, shaken
By his looks, prepare to flee:
Careless sinner, what will then become of thee?

4 Horrors past imagination
Will surprise your trembling heart,
When you hear your condemnation,
"Hence, accursed wretch depart!
"Thou with Satan and his angels have thy part!"

5 Satan, who now tries to please you,
Lest you timely warning take,
When that word is past will seize you,
Plunge you in the burning lake:
Think, poor sinner, thy eternal all's at stake.

6 But to those who have confessed,
Lov'd and serv'd the Lord below,
He will say, "Come near, ye blessed,
"See the kingdom I bestow;
"You for ever shall my love and glory know."

7 Under sorrows and reproaches, [raise;
May this thought your courage
Swiftly God's great day approaches,
Sighs shall then be chang'd to praise: [in a blaze.
We shall triumph when the world is

LXXVIII. *The Day of the Lord.*†

1 God, with one piercing glance, looks through
Creation's wide-extended frame;
The past and future, in his view,
And days, and ages, are the same.‡

2 Sinners who dare provoke his face,
Who on his patience long presume,
And trifle out his day of grace,
Will find he has a day of doom.

3 As pangs the lab'ring woman feels,
Or as the thief, in midnight-sleep!
So comes that day, for which the wheels [keep!
Of time their ceaseless motion

4 Hark! from the sky the trump proclaims
Jesus the Judge approaching nigh!
See, the creation wrapt in flames,
First kindled by his vengeful eye!

* Job iii. 17. † Book iii. Hymn 4. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 8—10.

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5 When thus the mountains melt like wax; [burn;
When earth, and air, and sea shall burn;
When all the frame of nature breaks,
Poor sinner, whither wilt thou turn?

6 The puny works which feeble men
Now boast, or covet, or admire;
Their pomp, and arts, and treasures then
Shall perish in one common fire.

7 Lord, fix our hearts and hopes above!
Since all below to ruin tends;
Here may we trust, obey, and love,
And there be found amongst thy friends.

LXXIX. *The great Tribunal.**

1 JOHN, in a vision, saw the day
When the Judge will hasten down:
Heav'n and earth shall flee away
From the terror of his frown:
Dead and living, small and great,
Raised from the earth and sea,
At his bar shall hear their fate,
What will then become of me?

2 Can I bear his awful looks?
Shall I stand in judgment then,
When I see the open'd books,
Written by the Almighty's pen?
If he to remembrance bring,
And expose to public view,
Ev'ry work and secret thing,
Ah, my soul, what canst thou do?

3 When the list shall be produc'd
Of the talents I enjoy'd;
Means and mercies, how abas'd!
Time and strength, how misemploy'd!
Conscience, then, compell'd to read,
Must allow the charge is true;
Say, my soul, what canst thou plead
In that hour, what wilt thou do?

4 But the book of life I see,
May my name be written there!
Then, from guilt and danger free,
Glad I'll meet him in the air:
That's the book I hope to plead,
'Tis the Gospel open'd wide;
Lord, I am a wretch indeed!
I have sinn'd, but thou hast dy'd.†

5 Now my soul knows what to do;
Thus I shall with boldness stand,
Number'd with the faithful few,
Own'd and sav'd at thy right hand:
If thou help a feeble worm
To believe thy promise now,
Justice will at last confirm
What thy mercy wrought below.

IV. CREATION.

LXXX. *The Old and New Creation.*

1 THAT was a wonder-working word
Which could the vast creation raise!
Angels, attendant on their Lord,
Admir'd the plan, and sung his praise.‡

2 From what a dark and shapeless mass,
All nature sprang at his command!
Let there be light, and light there was,
And sun, and stars, and sea, and land.

3 With equal speed the earth and seas
Their mighty Maker's voice obey'd;
He spake, and straight the plants and trees,
And birds, and beasts, and man were made.

4 But man, the Lord and crown of all,
By sin, his honour soon defac'd;
His heart, (how alter'd since the fall!)
Is dark, deform'd, and void, and waste.

* Rev. xx. 11, 12. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ Job, xxxviii. 7.

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6 The new creation of the soul
Does now no less his pow'r display,
Than when he form'd the mighty whole,
And kindled darkness into day.*

6 Though self-destroy'd, O Lord, we are,
Yet let us feel what thou canst do;
Thy word the ruin can repair,
And all our hearts create anew.

LXXXI. *The Book of Creation.*

1 The book of nature open lies,
With much instruction stor'd;
But, till the Lord anoints our eyes,
We cannot read a word.

2 Philosophers have por'd in vain,
And guess'd from age to age;
For reason's eye could ne'er attain
To understand a page.

3 Though to each star they give a name,
Its size and motions teach;
The truths which all the stars proclaim
Their wisdom cannot reach.

4 With skill to measure earth and sea,
And weigh the subtle air,
They cannot, Lord, discover thee,
Though present ev'ry where.

5 The knowledge of the saints excels
The wisdom of the schools;
To them his secrets God reveals,
Though men account them fools.

6 To them the sun and stars on high,
The flow'rs that paint the field,
And all the artless birds that fly,
Divine instruction yield.†

7 The creatures on their senses press,
As witnesses to prove
Their Saviour's pow'r and faithfulness,
His providence and love.

8 Thus may we study nature's book,
To make us wise indeed!
And pity those who only look
At what they cannot read.‡

LXXXII. *The Rainbow.*

1 When the sun, with cheerful beams,
Smiles upon a low'ring sky,
Soon its aspect soften'd seems,
And a rainbow meets the eye:
While the sky remains serene,
This bright arch is never seen.

2 Thus the Lord's supporting pow'r
Brightest to his saints appears,
When affliction's threat'ning hour
Fills their sky with clouds and fears:
He can wonders then perform,
Paint a rainbow on the storm.‖

3 All their graces doubly shine,
When their troubles press them sore;
And the promises, divine,
Give them joys unknown before:
As the colours of the bow [owe.
To the cloud their brightness

4 Favour'd John a rainbow saw,
Circling round the throne above;§
Hence the saints a pledge may draw
Of unchanging cov'nant-love:
Clouds a while may intervene,
But the bow will still be seen.

LXXXIII. *Thunder.*

1 When a black o'erspreading cloud
Has darken'd all the air,
And peals of thunder, roaring loud,
Proclaim the tempest near;

2 Then guilt and fear, the fruits of sin,
The sinner oft pursue;
A louder storm is heard within,
And conscience thunders too.

*2 Cor. iv. 6. † Matth. vi. 26—28. ‡ Rom. i. 20. ‖ Gen. ix. 14. § Rev. iv. 3.

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3 The law a fiery language speaks,
His danger he perceives;
Like Satan, who his ruin seeks,
He trembles and believes.

4 But when the sky serene appears,
And thunders roll no more,
He soon forgets his vows and fears,
Just as he did before.

5 But whither shall the sinner flee,
When nature's mighty frame,
The pond'rous earth, and air, and sea,
Shall all dissolve in flame?*

6 Amazing day! it comes apace!
The Judge is hasting down!
Will sinners bear to see his face,
Or stand before his frown?

7 Lord, let thy mercy find a way
To touch each stubborn heart;
That they may never hear thee say,
"Ye cursed ones, depart."

8 Believers, ye may well rejoice!
The thunder's loudest strains
Should be to you a welcome voice,
That tells you, "JESUS REIGNS!"

LXXXIV. *Lightning in the Night.*

1 A GLANCE from heav'n, with sweet effect,
Sometimes my pensive spirit cheers;
But ere I can my thoughts collect,
As suddenly it disappears.

2 So lightning, in the gloom of night,
Affords a momentary day;
Disclosing objects full in sight,
Which, soon as seen, are snatch'd away.

3 Ah! what avail these pleasing scenes!
They do but aggravate my pain;
While darkness quickly intervenes,
And swallows up my joys again.

4 But shall I murmur at relief?
Tho' short, it was a precious view,
Sent to control my unbelief,
And prove that what I read was true.

5 The lightning's flash did not create
The op'ning prospect it reveal'd;
But only show'd the real state
Of what the darkness had conceal'd.

6 Just so, we by a glimpse discern
The glorious things within the vail;
That, when in darkness, we may learn
To live by faith, till light prevail.

7 The Lord's great day will soon advance,
Dispersing all the shades of night;
Then we no more shall need a glance,
But see by an eternal light.

LXXXV. *On the Eclipse of the Moon.* July 30, 1776.

1 THE moon in silver glory shone,
And not a cloud in sight,
When suddenly a shade begun
To intercept her light.

2 How fast across her orb it spread,
How fast her light withdrew!
A circle, ting'd with languid red,
Was all appear'd in view.

3 While many, with unmeaning eye,
Gaze on thy works in vain,
Assist me, Lord, that I may try
Instruction to obtain.

4 Fain would my thankful heart and lips
Unite in praise of thee,
And meditate on thy eclipse,
In sad Gethsemane.

5 Thy people's guilt, a heavy load,
(When standing in their room,)
Depriv'd thee of the light of God,
And fill'd thy soul with gloom.

* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

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6 How punctually eclipses move,
Obedient to thy will!
Thus shall thy faithfulness and love
Thy promises fulfil.

7 Dark, like the moon without the sun,
I mourn thine absence, Lord!
For light or comfort I have none
But what thy beams afford.

8 But, lo! the hour draws near apace,
When changes shall be o'er;
Then I shall see thee face to face,*
And be eclips'd no more.

LXXXVI. *Moon-light.*

1 The moon has but a borrow'd light,
A faint and feeble ray;
She owes her beauty to the night,
And hides herself by day.

2 No cheering warmth her beam conveys,
Though pleasing to behold;
We might upon her brightness gaze
Till we were num'd with cold.

3 Just such is all the light to man
Which reason can impart,
It cannot show one object plain,
Nor warm the frozen heart.

4 Thus moonlight views of truth divine
To many fatal prove;
For what avail in gifts to shine
Without a spark of love?†

5 The Gospel, like the sun at noon,
Affords a glorious light;
Then fallen reason's boasted moon
Appears no longer bright.

6 And grace not light alone bestows,
But adds a quick'ning pow'r;
The desert blossoms like the rose,‡
And sin prevails no more.

LXXXVII. *The Sea.*||

1 If, for a time, the air be calm,
Serene and smooth the sea appears,
And shows no danger to alarm
The unexperienc'd landsman's fears:

2 But if the tempest once arise,
The faithless water swells and raves:
Its billows, foaming to the skies,
Disclose a thousand threat'ning graves.

3 My untry'd heart thus seem'd to me,
(So little of myself I knew,)
Smooth, as the calm, unruffled sea,
But, ah! it prov'd as treach'rous too!

4 The peace, of which I had a taste,
When Jesus first his love reveal'd,
I fondly hop'd would always last,
Because my foes were then conceal'd.

5 But when I felt the tempter's pow'r
Rouse my corruptions from their sleep,
I trembled at the stormy hour,
And saw the horrors of the deep.

6 Now, on presumption's billows borne,
My spirit seem'd the Lord to dare;
Now, quick as thought, a sudden turn
Plung'd me in gulfs of black despair.

7 Lord, save me, or I sink, I pray'd;
He heard, and bid the tempest cease;
The angry waves his word obey'd,
And all my fears were hush'd to peace.

8 The peace is his, and not my own,
My heart, (no better than before,)
Is still to dreadful changes prone,
Then never let me trust it more.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1. ‡ Isaiah, xxxv. 1. || Book i. Hymn 115.

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LXXXVIII. *The Flood.*

1 Though small the drops of falling rain,
If one be singly view'd;
Collected, they o'erspread the plain,
And form a mighty flood.

2 The house it meets with in its course,
Should not be built on clay,
Lest, with a wild, resistless force,
It sweep the whole away.

3 Though for a while it seem'd secure,
It will not bear the shock,
Unless it has foundations sure,
And stands upon a rock.

4 Thus sinners think their evil deeds,
Like drops of rain, are small;
But it the pow'r of thought exceeds,
To count the sum of all.

5 One sin can raise, though small it seems,
A flood to drown the soul;
What then, when countless million streams
Shall join to swell the whole.

6 Yet, while they think the weather fair,
If warn'd, they smile or frown;
But they will tremble and despair
When the fierce flood comes down.

7 Oh! then on Jesus ground your hope,
That stone in Zion laid;*
Lest your poor building quickly drop,
With ruin on your head.

LXXXIX. *The Thaw.*

1 The ice and snow we lately saw,
Which cover'd all the ground,
Are melted soon before the thaw,
And can no more be found.

2 Could all the art of man suffice
To move away the snow,
To clear the rivers from the ice,
Or make the waters flow?

3 No, 'tis the work of God alone;
An emblem of the pow'r
By which he melts the heart of stone
In his appointed hour.

4 All outward means, till he appears,
Will ineffectual prove;
Though much the sinner sees and hears,
He cannot learn to love.

5 But let the stoutest sinner feel
The soft'ning warmth of grace,
Though hard as ice, or rocks, or steel,
His heart dissolves apace.

6 Seeing the blood which Jesus spilt,
To save his soul from wo,
His hatred, unbelief, and guilt,
All melt away like snow.

7 Jesus, we in thy name entreat,
Reveal thy gracious arm;
And grant thy Spirit's kindly heat,
Our frozen hearts to warm.

XC. *The Loadstone.*

1 As needles point towards the pole,
When touch'd by the magnetic stone;
So faith in Jesus gives the soul
A tendency before unknown.

2 Till then, by blinded passions led,
In search of fancied good we range;
The paths of disappointment tread,
To nothing fix'd, but love of change.

* Matth. vii. 24. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

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3 But, when the Holy Ghost imparts
A knowledge of the Saviour's love,
Our wand'ring, weary, restless hearts
Are fix'd at once, no more to move.

4 Now a new principle takes place,
Which guides and animates the will;
This love, another name for grace,
Constrains to good, and bars from ill.

5 By love's pure light we soon perceive
Our noblest bliss and proper end;
And gladly ev'ry idol leave,
To love and serve our Lord and Friend.

6 Thus, borne along by faith and hope,
We feel the Saviour's words are true;
"And I, if I be lifted up, [too."*
"Will draw the sinner upwards

XCI. *The Spider and Bee.*

1 On the same flow'r we often see
The loathsome spider and the bee;
But what they get by working there
Is diff'rent, as their natures are.

2 The bee a sweet reward obtains,
And honey well repays his pains;
Home to the hive he bears the store,
And then returns in quest of more.

3 But no sweet flow'rs that grace the field
Can honey to the spider yield;
A cobweb all that he can spin,
And poison all he stores within.

4 Thus in that sacred field, the Word,
With flow'rs of God's own planting stor'd,
Like bees his children feed and thrive,
And bring home honey to the hive.

5 There, spider-like, the wicked come,
And seem to taste the sweet perfume;
But the vile venom of their hearts
To poison all their food converts.

6 From the same truth believers prize,
They weave vain refuges of lies;
And from the promise license draw,
To trifle with the holy law.

7 Lord, shall thy word of life and love
The means of death to numbers prove?
Unless thy grace our hearts renew,
We sink to hell, with heav'n in view.†

XCII. *The Bee saved from the Spider.*

1 The subtle spider often weaves
His unexpected snares
Among the balmy flow'rs and leaves,
To which the bee repairs.

2 When in his web he sees one hang,
With a malicious joy
He darts upon it with his fang,
To poison and destroy.

3 How welcome then some pitying friend,
To save the threaten'd bee!
The spider's treach'rous web to rend,
And set the captive free.

4 My soul has been in such a case:
When first I knew the Lord,
I hasted to the means of grace,
Where sweets I knew were stor'd.

5 Little I thought of danger near,
That soon my joys would ebb;
But, ah! I met a spider there,
Who caught me in his web.

6 Then Satan rais'd his pois'nous sting,
And aim'd his blows at me;
While I, poor, helpless, trembling thing,
Could neither fight nor flee.

* John xii. 32.

† Book iii. Hymn 71.

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7 But, oh! the Saviour's pitying eye
Reliev'd me from despair;
He saw me at the point to die,
And broke the fatal snare.

8 My case his heedless saints should warn,
Or cheer them if afraid;
May you from me your danger learn,
And where to look for aid.

XCIII. *The tamed Lion.*

1 A LION, though by nature wild,
The art of man can tame;
He stands before his keeper, mild
And gentle as a lamb.

2 He watches, with submissive eye,
The hand that gives him food,
As if he meant to testify
A sense of gratitude.

3 But man himself, who thus subdues
The fiercest beasts of prey,
A nature more unfeeling shows,
And far more fierce than they.

4 Though by the Lord preserv'd and fed,
He proves rebellious still;
And while he eats his maker's bread,
Resists his holy will.

5 Alike in vain, of grace that saves,
Or threat'ning law he hears;
The savage scorns, blasphemes, and raves,
But neither loves nor fears.

6 O Saviour! how thy wondrous pow'r
By angels is proclaim'd,
When in thine own appointed hour,
They see this lion tam'd.

7 The love thy bleeding cross displays,
The hardest heart subdues;
Here furious lions, while they gaze,
Their rage and fierceness lose.*

8 Yet we are but renew'd in part,
The lion still remains;
Lord, drive him wholly from my heart,
Or keep him fast in chains.

XCIV. *Sheep.*

1 THE Saviour calls his people sheep,
And bids them on his love rely;
For he alone their souls can keep,
And he alone their wants supply.

2 The bull can fight, the hare can flee,
The ant, in summer, food prepare;
But helpless sheep, and such are we,
Depend upon the shepherd's care.

3 Jehovah is our Shepherd's name;†
Then what have we, tho' weak, to fear?
Our sin and folly we proclaim,
If we despond while he is near.

4 When Satan threatens to devour,
When troubles press on ev'ry side,
Think of our Shepherd's care and pow'r,
He can defend, he will provide.

5 See the rich pastures of his grace,
Where, in full streams, salvation flows!
There he appoints our resting-place,
And we may feed, secure from foes.

6 There, 'midst the flock, the Shepherd dwells,
The sheep around in safety lie;
The wolf, in vain, with malice swells,
For he protects them with his eye.‡

7 Dear Lord, if I am one of thine,
From anxious thoughts I would be free;
To trust, and love, and praise, is mine,
The care of all belongs to thee.

*Isaiah, xi. 6. †Psalm xxiii. 1. ‡Micah, v. 4.

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XCV. *The Garden.*

1 A GARDEN contemplation suits
And may instruction yield,
Sweeter than all the flow'rs and fruits
With which the spot is fill'd.

2 Eden was Adam's dwelling-place
While bless'd with innocence;
But sin o'erwhelm'd him with disgrace,
And drove the rebel thence.

3 Oft as the garden-walk we tread,
We should bemoan his fall;
The trespass of our legal head
In ruin plung'd us all.

4 The garden of Gethsemane
The second Adam saw,
Oppress'd with wo, to set us free
From the avenging law.

5 How stupid we, who can forget,
With gardens in our sight,
His agonies and bloody sweat,
In that tremendous night!

6 His church as a fair garden stands,
Which walls of love enclose;
Each tree is planted by his hands,*
And by his blessing grows.

7 Believing hearts are gardens too,
For grace has sown its seeds,
Where once, by nature, nothing grew,
But thorns and worthless weeds.

8 Such themes, to those who Jesus love,
May constant joys afford,
And make a barren desert prove
The garden of our Lord.

XCVI. *For a Garden-Seat, or Summer-House.*

1 A SHELTER from the rain or wind,†
A shade from scorching heat,
A resting-place you here may find,
To ease your weary feet.

2 Enter, but with a serious thought,
Consider who is near!
This is a consecrated spot,
The Lord is present here!

3 A question of the utmost weight,
While reading, meets your eye;
May conscience witness to your state,
And give a true reply!

4 Is Jesus to your heart reveal'd,
As full of truth and grace?
And is his name your hope and shield,
Your rest and hiding-place?

5 If so, for all events prepar'd,
Whatever storms may rise,
He, whom you love, will safely guard
And guide you to the skies.

6 No burning sun, or storm, or rain,
Will there your peace annoy;
No sin, temptation, grief, or pain,
Intrude to damp your joy.

7 But if his name you have not known,
Oh, seek him while you may!
Lest you should meet his awful frown,
In that approaching day.

8 When the avenging Judge you see,
With terrors on his brow,
Where can you hide, or whither flee,
If you reject him now?

XCVII. *The Creatures in the Lord's hands.*

1 THE water stood like walls of brass,
To let the sons of Israel pass;‡
And from the rock in rivers burst,‖
At Moses' prayer to quench their thirst.

* Isa lxi. 3. † Isa. xxxii. 2. ‡ Exod xiv. 22. ‖ Numb. xx. 11.

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2 The fire, restrain'd by God's commands,
Could only burn his people's bands,
Too faint, when he was with them there,
To singe their garments or their hair.*

3 At Daniel's feet the lion's lay
Like harmless lambs, nor touch'd their prey;†
And ravens, which on carrion fed,
Procur'd Elijah flesh and bread.

4 Thus creatures only can fulfil
Their great Creator's holy will; [aid,
And, when his servants need their
His purposes must be obey'd.

5 So, if his blessing he refuse,
Their pow'r to help they quickly lose,
Sure as on creatures we depend,
Our hopes in disappointment end.

6 Then let us trust the Lord alone,
And creature-confidence disown,
Nor if they threaten need we fear,
They cannot hurt if he be near.

7 If instruments of pain they prove,
Still they are guided by his love;
As lancets by the surgeon's skill,
Which wound to cure, and not to kill.

XCVIII. *On dreaming.*

1 When slumber seals our weary eyes,
The busy fancy wakeful keeps,
The scenes which then before us rise,
Prove something in us never sleeps.

2 As in another world we seem,
A new creation of our own;
All appears real, though a dream,
And all familiar, though unknown.

3 Sometimes the mind beholds again
The past day's bus'ness in review;
Resumes the pleasure or the pain,
And sometimes all we meet is new.

4 What schemes we form, what pains we take!
We fight, we run, we fly, we fall;
But all is ended when we wake,
We scarcely then a trace recall.

5 But though our dreams are often wild, [storm;
Like clouds before the driving
Yet some important may be styl'd,
Sent to admonish or inform.

7 What mighty agents have access,
What friends from heav'n, or foes from hell,
Our minds to comfort, or distress,
When we are sleeping, who can tell?

7 One thing, at least, and 'tis enough,
We learn from this surprising fact;
Our dreams afford sufficient proof,
The soul without the flesh, can act.

8 This life, which mortals so esteem,
That many choose it for their all,
They will confess was but a dream,‡
When 'waken'd by death's awful call.

XCIX. *The World.*

1 See, the world for youth prepares,
Harlot-like, her gaudy snares!
Pleasures round her seem to wait,
But 'tis all a painted cheat.

2 Rash and unsuspecting youth,
Thinks to find thee always smooth,
Always kind, till better taught,
By experience dearly bought.

3 So the calm, but faithless sea,
(Lively emblem, world, of thee,)
Tempts the shepherd from the shore,
Foreign regions to explore.

* Daniel, iii. 27. † Daniel vi. 23. ‡ Isaiah, xxix. 8.

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4 While no wrinkled wave is seen,
While the sky remains serene,
Fill'd with hopes and golden schemes,
Of a storm he little dreams.

5 But, ere long, the tempest raves,
Then he trembles at the waves;
Wishes then he had been wise,
But too late—he sinks and dies.

6 Hapless thus, are they, (vain world,)
Soon on the rocks of ruin hurl'd,
Who, admiring thee, untry'd,
Court thy pleasures, wealth or pride.

7 Such a shipwreck had been mine,
Had not Jesus, (name divine!)
Sav'd me with a mighty hand,
And restor'd my soul to land.

8 Now, with gratitude, I raise
Ebenezers to his praise;
Now my rash pursuits are o'er,
I can trust thee, world, no more.

C. *The Enchantment dissolved.*

1 Blinded in youth by Satan's arts,
The world to our unpractis'd hearts
A flatt'ring prospect shows;
Our fancy forms a thousand schemes
Of gay delights, and golden dreams,
And undisturb'd repose.

2 So in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic pow'r produc'd in haste,
(As ancient fables say,)
Castles, and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ller meet,
And stop him in his way.

3 But while he listens with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground;
Thus, if the Lord our spirit touch,
The world, which promis'd us so much,
A wilderness is found.

4 At first we start and feel distress'd,
Convinc'd we never can have rest
In such a wretched place;
But he whose mercy breaks the charm,
Reveals his own almighty arm,
And bids us seek his face.

5 Then we begin to live indeed,
When from our sin and bondage freed
By this beloved Friend;
We follow him from day to day,
Assur'd of grace through all the way,
And glory at the end.

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OLNEY HYMNS, &c.

BOOK III.

ON THE RISE, PROGRESS, CHANGES, AND COMFORTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

(Under the following heads :)

I. SOLEMN ADDRESSES TO SINNERS.
II. SEEKING, PLEADING, HOPING.
III. CONFLICT.
IV. COMFORT.
V. DEDICATION AND SURRENDER.
VI. CAUTIONS.
VII. PRAISE.
VIII. SHORT HYMNS.
BEFORE SERMON.
AFTER SERMON.
GLORIA PATRI.

I. SOLEMN ADDRESSES TO SINNERS.

I. *Expostulation.*

1 No words can declare,
No fancy can paint,
What rage and despair,
What hopeless complaint,
Fill Satan's dark dwelling,
The prison beneath;
What weeping, and yelling,
And gnashing of teeth!

2 Yet sinners will choose
This dreadful abode;
Each madly pursues
The dangerous road;
Though God give them warning,
They onward will go,
They answer with scorning,
And rush upon wo.

3 How sad to behold
The rich and the poor,
The young and the old,
All blindly secure!
All posting to ruin,
Refusing to stop;
Ah! think what you're doing,
While yet there is hope!

4 How weak is your hand
To fight with the Lord!
How can you withstand
The edge of his sword?
What hope of escaping
For those who oppose,
When hell is wide gaping
To swallow his foes!

5 How oft have you dar'd
The Lord to his face!
Yet still you are spar'd
To hear of his grace;
Oh! pray for repentance
And life-giving faith,
Before the just sentence
Consign you to death.

6 It is not too late
To Jesus to flee,
His mercy is great,
His pardon is free!
His blood has such virtue,
For all that believe,
That nothing can hurt you,
If him you receive.

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II. *Alarm.*

1 Stop, poor sinner! stop and think
Before you further go!
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting wo?
Once again, I charge you, stop!
For, unless you warning take,
Ere you are aware, you drop
Into the burning lake!

2 Say, have you an arm like God,
That you his will oppose?
Fear you not that iron rod
With which he breaks his foes?
Can you stand in that dread day,
When he judgment shall proclaim,
And the earth shall melt away,
Like wax before the flame?

3 Pale-fac'd death will quickly come,
To drag you to his bar;
Then to hear your awful doom,
Will fill you with despair.
All your sins will round you crowd,
Sins of a blood-crimson dye;
Each for vengeance crying loud,
And what can you reply?

4 Though your heart be made of steel,
Your forehead lin'd with brass,
God at length will make you feel,
He will not let you pass:
Sinners then in vain will call,
(Though they now despise his grace,)
Rocks and mountains, on us fall,
And hide us from his face!*

5 But as yet there is a hope
You may his mercy know;
Though his arm is lifted up,
He still forbears the blow:
'Twas for sinners Jesus dy'd,
Sinners he invites to come;
None who come shall be deny'd,
He says, "There still is room."†

III. *We were once as you are.*

1 Shall men pretend to pleasure
Who never knew the Lord?
Can all the worldling's treasure
True peace of mind afford?
They shall obtain this jewel,
And what their hearts desire,
When they, by adding fuel,
Can quench the flame of fire.

2 Till you can bid the ocean,
When furious tempests roar,‡
Forget its wonted motion,
And rage and swell no more,
In vain your expectation
To find content in sin,
Or freedom from vexation
While passions reign within.

3 Come turn your thoughts to Jesus,
If you would good possess;
'Tis he alone that frees us
From guilt and from distress:
When he, by faith, is present,
The sinner's troubles cease;
His ways are truly pleasant,
And all his paths are peace.§

4 Our time in sin we wasted,
And fed upon the wind;
Until his love we tasted
No comfort could we find:
But now we stand to witness
His pow'r and grace to you;
May you perceive its fitness,
And call upon him too!

5 Our pleasure and our duty,
Though opposite before,
Since we have seen his beauty,
Are join'd, to part no more:
It is our highest pleasure,
No less than duty's call,
To love him beyond measure,
And serve him with our all.

IV. *Prepare to meet God.*

1 Sinner, art thou still secure?
Wilt thou still refuse to pray?
Can thy heart or hands endure
In the Lord's avenging day?

* Rev. vi. 16. † Luke, xiv. 22. ‡ Isa. lvii. 20, 21. § Prov. iii. 17.

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See, his mighty arm is bar'd!
Awful terrors clothe his brow!
For his judgment stand prepar'd,
Thou must either break or bow.

2 At his presence nature shakes,
Earth, affrighted, hastes to flee,
Solid mountains melt like wax,
What will then become of thee?
Who his advent may abide?
You that glory in your shame,
Will you find a place to hide
When the world is wrapt in flame?

3 Then the rich, the great, the wise,
Trembling, guilty, self-condemn'd,
Must behold the wrathful eyes
Of the Judge they once blasphem'd:
Where are now their haughty looks?
Oh, their horror and despair!
When they see the open'd books,
And their dreadful sentence hear!

4 Lord, prepare us by thy grace!
Soon we must resign our breath;
And our souls be call'd, to pass
Through the iron gate of death:
Let us now our days improve,
Listen to the Gospel voice;
Seek the things that are above,
Scorn the world's pretended joys.

5 Oh! when flesh and heart shall fail,
Let thy love our spirits cheer,
Strengthen'd thus, we shall prevail
Over Satan, sin, and fear:
Trusting in thy precious name,
May we thus our journey end:
Then our foes shall lose their aim,
And the Judge will be our friend.

V. *Invitation.*

1 SINNERS, hear the Saviour's call,
He now is passing by;
He has seen thy grievous thrall,
And heard thy mournful cry.
He has pardons to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears,
See the love that fills his heart,
And wipe away thy tears.

2 Why art thou afraid to come
And tell him all thy case?
He will not pronounce thy doom,
Nor frown thee from his face;
Wilt thou fear Immanuel?
Wilt thou dread the Lamb of God,
Who, to save thy soul from hell,
Has shed his precious blood?

3 Think how on the cross he hung,
Pierc'd with a thousand wounds!
Hark, from each, as with a tongue,
The voice of pardon sounds!
See, from all his bursting veins,
Blood of wondrous virtue flow!
Shed to wash away thy stains,
And ransom thee from wo.

4 Though his majesty be great,
His mercy is no less;
Though he thy transgressions hate,
He feels for thy distress:
By himself the Lord has sworn
He delights not in thy death;*
But invites thee to return,
That thou may'st live by faith.

5 Raise thy downcast eyes and see
What throngs his throne surround!
These, though sinners once, like thee,
Have full salvation found:
Yield not then to unbelief, [room!"
While he says "There yet is
Though of sinners thou art chief,
Since Jesus calls thee, come.

II. SEEKING, PLEADING, AND HOPING.

VI. *The Burdened Sinner.*

1 AH! what can I do,
Or where be secure!
If justice pursue
What heart can endure!
The heart breaks asunder,
Though hard as a stone,
When God speaks in thunder,
And makes himself known.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

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2 With terror I read
My sins' heavy score,
The number exceeds
The sands on the shore;
Guilt makes me unable
To stand or to flee;
So Cain murder'd Abel,
And trembled like me.

3 Each sin, like his blood,
With terrible cry,
Calls loudly on God
To strike from on high:
Nor can my repentance,
Extorted by fear,
Reverse the just sentence;
'Tis just, though severe.

4 The case is too plain,
I have my own choice;
Again, and again,
I slighted his voice;
His warnings neglected,
His patience abus'd,
His Gospel rejected,
His mercy refus'd.

5 And must I then go,
For ever to dwell
In torments and wo,
With devils, in hell!
Oh! where is the Saviour
I scorn'd in times past?
His word in my favour
Would save me at last.

6 Lord Jesus, on thee
I venture to call,
Oh look upon me,
The vilest of all!
For whom didst thou languish
And bleed on the tree?
Oh pity my anguish,
And say, "'Twas for thee!"

7 A case such as mine
Will honour thy pow'r;
All hell will repine,
All heav'n will adore:
If in condemnation
Strict justice takes place,
It shines in salvation
More glorious, through grace.

VII. *Behold, I am vile!*

1 O Lord, how vile am I,
Unholy and unclean!
How can I dare to venture nigh
With such a load of sin?

2 Is this polluted heart
A dwelling fit for thee?
Swarming, alas! in ev'ry part,
What evils do I see!

3 If I attempt to pray,
And lisp thy holy name,
My thoughts are hurry'd soon away,
I know not where I am.

4 If in thy word I look,
Such darkness fills my mind,
I only read a sealed book,
But no relief can find.

5 Thy Gospel oft I hear,
But hear it still in vain;
Without desire, or love, or fear,
I like a stone remain.

6 Myself can hardly bear
This wretched heart of mine;
How hateful then must it appear
To those pure eyes of thine?

7 And must I, then, indeed,
Sink in despair and die? [bleed
Fain would I hope that thou didst
For such a wretch as I.

8 That blood which thou hast spilt,
That grace which is thine own,
Can cleanse the vilest sinner's guilt,
And soften hearts of stone.

9 Low at thy feet I bow,
Oh pity and forgive!
Here will I lie, and wait till thou
Shalt bid me rise and live.

VIII. C. *The shining Light.*

1 My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

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2 Ah, whither shall I fly!
I hear the thunder roar;
The law proclaims destruction nigh,
And vengeance at the door.

3 When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom;
But sure a friendly whisper says,
"Flee from the wrath to come."

4 I see, or think I see,
A glimm'ring from afar;
A beam of day that shines for me,
To save me from despair.

5 Fore-runner of the sun,*.
It marks the pilgrim's way;
I'll gaze upon it while I run,
And watch the rising day.

IX. *Encouragement.*

1 My soul is beset
With grief and dismay;
I owe a vast debt,
And nothing can pay;
I must go to prison,
Unless that dear Lord,
Who dy'd and is risen,
His pity afford.

2 The death that he dy'd,
The blood that he spilt,
To sinners apply'd,
Discharge from all guilt;
This great intercessor
Can give, if he please,
The vilest transgressor
Immediate release.

3 When nail'd to the tree,
He answer'd the pray'r
Of one, who, like me,
Was nigh to despair;†
He did not upbraid him
With all he had done,
But instantly made him
A saint and a son.

4 The jailor, I read,
A pardon receiv'd ‡
And how was he freed?
He only believ'd:
His case mine resembled,
Like me, he was foul,
Like me, too, he trembled,
But faith made him whole.

5 Though Saul, in his youth,
To madness enrag'd,
Against the Lord's truth
And people engag'd;
Yet Jesus, the Saviour,
Whom long he revil'd, §
Receiv'd him to favour,
And made him a child.

6 A foe to all good,
In wickedness skill'd,
Manasseh with blood
Jerusalem fill'd;
In evil long harden'd,
The Lord he defy'd;
Yet he, too, was pardon'd,
When mercy he cry'd. ‖

7 Of sinners the chief,
And viler than all,
The jailor or thief,
Manasseh or Saul:
Since they were forgiv'n
Why should I despair,
While Christ is in heav'n,
And still answers pray'r?

X. *The Waiting Soul.*

1 Breathe from the gentle south, O Lord,
And cheer me from the north;
Blow on the treasures of thy word,
And call the spices forth!

2 I wish, thou know'st, to be resign'd,
And wait with patient hope;
But hope delay'd, fatigues the mind,
And drinks the spirits up.

3 Help me to reach the distant goal,
Confirm my feeble knee,
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of thee.

4 Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet since I feel it so,
It yields some hope of life divine
Within, however low.

* Ps. cxxx. 6. † Luke, xxiii. 43. ‡ Acts, xvi. 31. § 1 Tim. i. 16.
‖ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

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5 I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar;
And ev'ry door is shut, but one,
And that is mercy's door.

6 There, till the dear Deliv'rer come,
I'll wait with humble pray'r;
And when he calls his exile home,
The Lord shall find him there.

XI. *The Effort.*

1 CHEER up, my soul, there is a mercy seat, [answers pray'r;
Sprinkled with blood, where Jesus
There humbly cast thyself beneath his feet, [there.
For never needy sinner perish'd

2 Lord, I am come! thy promise is my plea, [ture nigh;
Without thy word I durst not ven-
But thou hast call'd the burden'd soul to thee; [am I!
A weary, burden'd soul, O Lord,

3 Bow'd down beneath a heavy load of sin, [ly prest,
By Satan's fierce temptations sore-
Beset without, and full of fears within, [thee for rest.
Trembling and faint, I come to

4 Be thou my refuge, Lord, my hiding place, [thy side;
I know no force can tear me from
Unmov'd I then all my accusers face,
And answer ev'ry charge with "Jesus dy'd."

5 Yes, thou didst weep, and bleed, and groan, and die;
Well hast thou known what fierce temptations mean;
Such was thy love, and now, enthron'd on high,
The same compassions in thy bosom reign.

6 Lord, give me faith—he hears—what grace is this!
Dry up thy tears, my soul, and cease to grieve: [he is,
He shows me what he did, and who
I must, I will, I can, I do believe.

XII. *The Effort—in another Measure.*

1 APPROACH, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers pray'r;
There humbly fall before his feet,
For none can perish there.

2 Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burden'd souls to thee,
And such, O Lord, am I.

3 Bow'd down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely prest;
By war without, and fears within,
I come to thee for rest.

4 Be thou my shield and hiding-place!
That, shelter'd near thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face;
And tell him, "Thou hast dy'd."

5 Oh wondrous love! to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners, such as I,
Might plead thy gracious name.

6 "Poor, tempest-tossed soul, be still,
"My promis'd grace receive;
'Tis Jesus speaks—I must, I will,
I can, I do believe.

XIII. *Seeking the Beloved.*

1 To those who know the Lord, I speak,
Is my beloved near?
The bridegroom of my soul I seek,
Oh! when will he appear?

2 Though once a man of grief and shame,
Yet now he fills a throne, [name,
And bears the greatest, sweetest
That earth or heav'n have known.

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3 Grace flies before, and love attends
His steps where'er he goes;
Though none can see him but his friends,
And they were once his foes.

4 He speaks—obedient to his call
Our warm affections move;
Did he but shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love.

5 Then love in ev'ry heart would reign,
And war would cease to roar;
And cruel and blood-thirsty men
Would thirst for blood no more.

6 Such Jesus is, and such his grace,
Oh may he shine on you!
And tell him, when you see his face,
I long to see him too.*

XIV. *Rest for weary souls.*

1 Does the Gospel-word proclaim
Rest for those who weary be?†
Then, my soul, put in thy claim,
Sure that promise speaks to thee:
Marks of grace I cannot show,
All polluted is my best;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.

2 Burden'd with a load of sin,
Harass'd with tormenting doubt,
Hourly conflicts from within,
Hourly crosses from without:
All my little strength is gone,
Sink I must without supply;
Sure upon the earth is none
Can more weary be than I.

3 In the ark the weary dove
Found a welcome resting-place;‡
Thus my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the ark of grace:
Tempest-toss'd I long have been,
And the flood increases fast;
Open, Lord, and take me in,
Till the storm be overpast.

4 Safely lodg'd within thy breast,
What a wondrous change I find!
Now I know thy promis'd rest
Can compose a troubled mind:
You that weary are like me,
Hearken to the Gospel-call;
To the ark for refuge flee,
Jesus will receive you all!

III. CONFLICT.

XV. C. *Light shining out of Darkness.*

1 God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

2 Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

3 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

4 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

5 His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

6 Blind unbelief is sure to err,‖
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

XVI. C. *Welcome Cross.*

1 'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's pow'r to know,
Sanctifying ev'ry loss:

* Cant. v. 8. † Matth. xi. 28. ‡ Gen. viii. 9. ‖ John, xiii. 7.

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Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscrib'd upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

2 God, in Israel, sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up, and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil:
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to pray'r;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

3 Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a cast-away:
Bastards may escape the rod,*
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might.

XVII. C.. *Afflictions sanctified by the Word.*

1 O how I love thy holy word,
Thy gracious covenant, O Lord!
It guides me in the peaceful way,
I think upon it all the day.

2 What are the mines of shining wealth,
[of health!
The strength of youth, the bloom
What are all joys, compar'd with those
Thine everlasting word bestows!

3 Long unafflicted, undismay'd,
In pleasure's path secure I stray'd;
Thou mad'st me feel thy chast'ning rod,
And strait I turn'd unto my God.†

4 What though it pierc'd my fainting heart,
[smart;
I bless thine hand that caus'd the
It taught my tears a while to flow,
But sav'd me from eternal wo.

5 Oh! had'st thou left me unchastis'd,
Thy precept I had still despis'd;
And still the snare, in secret laid,
Had my unwary feet betray'd.

6 I love thee, therefore, O my God,
And breathe towards thy dear abode;
Where, in thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest.

XVIII. C. *Temptation.*

1 The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to thee I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

2 O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guide and guard me through the storm;
Defend me from each threat'ning ill,
Control the waves, say, "Peace, be still."

3 Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hopes on thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

4 Dangers, of ev'ry shape and name,
Attend the foll'wers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
And leave it to return no more.

5 Though tempest-toss'd, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter'd bark again.

* Heb. xii. 8.

† Psalm cxix. 71.

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XIX. C. *Looking upwards in a Storm.*

1 God of my life, to thee I call,
Afflicted, at thy feet I fall;
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail!*

2 Friend of the friendless and the faint!
Where should I lodge my deep complaint?
Where, but with thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor?

3 Did ever mourner plead with thee,
And thou refuse that mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fix'd remain,
That none shall seek thy face in vain?

4 That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst thou not hear and answer pray'r;
But a pray'r-hearing, answ'ring God
Supports me under ev'ry load.

5 Fair is the lot that's cast for me;
I have an advocate with thee;
They whom the world caresses most
Have no such privilege to boast.

6 Poor though I am, despis'd, forgot,†
Yet God, my God, forgets me not;
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

XX. C. *The Valley of the Shadow of Death.*

1 My soul is sad and much dismay'd;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heav'nly pilgrimage oppose!

2 See, from the ever-burning lake,
How like a smoky cloud they rise!
With horrid blasts my soul they shake
With storms of blasphemies and lies.

3 Their fiery arrows reach the mark,‡
My throbbing heart with anguish tear;
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

4 I hate the thought that wrongs the Lord;
Oh! I would drive it from my breast,
With thy own sharp two-edged sword,
Far as the east is from the west.

5 Come, then, and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have receiv'd;
Nor let the pow'rs of darkness boast
That I am foil'd, and thou art griev'd!

XXI. *The Storm Hushed.*

1 'Tis past—the dreadful stormy night
Is gone, with all its fears!
And now I see returning light,
The Lord, my Sun, appears.

2 The tempter, who but lately said
I soon should be his prey,
Has heard my Saviour's voice, and fled,
With shame and grief, away.

3 Ah! Lord, since thou didst hide thy face,
What has my soul endur'd?
But now 'tis past, I feel thy grace,
And all my wounds are cur'd!

4 Oh wondrous change! but just before
Despair beset me round;
I heard the lion's horrid roar,
And trembled at the sound.

* Psalm lxix. 15. † Psalm xl. 17. ‡ Eph. vi. 16.

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5 Before corruption, guilt, and fear,
My comforts, blasted, fell;
And unbelief discover'd near
The dreadful depths of hell.

6 But Jesus pity'd my distress,
He heard my feeble cry,
Reveal'd his blood and righteousness,
And brought salvation nigh.

7 Beneath the banner of his love
I now secure remain; [move,
The tempter frets, but dares not
To break my peace again.

8 Lord, since thou thus hast broke my bands,
And set the captive free, [hands,
I would devote my tongue, my
My heart, my all, to thee.

XXII. *Help in the Time of Need.*

1 UNLESS the Lord had been my stay,
(With trembling joy my soul may say,)
My cruel foe had gain'd his end:
But he appear'd for my relief,
And Satan sees, with shame and grief,
That I have an Almighty Friend.

2 Oh! 'twas a dark and trying hour,
When, harass'd by the tempter's pow'r,
I felt my strongest hopes decline!
You only who have known his arts,
You only who have felt his darts,
Can pity such a case as mine.

3 Loud in my ears a charge he read,
(My conscience witness'd all he said,)
My long black list of outward sin;
Then bringing forth my heart to view, [knew,
Too well what's hidden there he
He show'd me ten times worse within.

4 'Tis all too true, my soul reply'd,
But I remember Jesus dy'd,
And now he fills a throne of grace;
I'll go, as I have done before,
His mercy I may still implore,
I have his promise, "Seek my face."

5 But, as when sudden fogs arise,
The trees and hills, the sun and skies, [view;
Are all at once conceal'd from
So clouds of horror, black as night,
By Satan rais'd, hid from my sight
The throne of grace and promise too.

6 Then, while beset with guilt and fear,
He try'd to urge me to despair,
He try'd, and he almost prevail'd;
But Jesus, by a heav'nly ray,
Drove clouds, and guilt, and fear away,
And all the tempter's malice fail'd.

XXIII. C. *Peace after a Storm.*

1 WHEN darkness long has veil'd my mind, [pears,
And smiling day once more ap-
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

2 Strait I upbraid my wand'ring heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of thee!

3 Oh! let me, then, at length, be taught
What I am still so slow to learn;
That God is love, and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

4 Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply try'd,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

5 But O, my Lord, one look from thee
Subdues the disobedient will,
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And thy rebellious worm is still.

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6 Thou art as ready to forgive
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive;
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

XXIV. C. *Mourning and Longing.*

1 The Saviour hides his face!
My spirit thirsts to prove
Renew'd supplies of pard'ning grace,
And never-fading love.

2 The favour'd souls who know
What glories shine in him,
Pant for his presence, as the roe
Pants for the living stream!

3 What trifles tease me now!
They swarm like summer flies;
They cleave to ev'ry thing I do,
And swim before my eyes.

4 How dull the Sabbath-day,
Without the Sabbath's Lord!
How toilsome then to sing and pray,
And wait upon the word!

5 Of all the truths I hear,
How few delight my taste!
I glean a berry here and there,
But mourn the vintage past.

6 Yet let me, (as I ought,)
Still hope to be supply'd;
No pleasure else is worth a thought,
Nor shall I be deny'd.

7 Though I am but a worm,
Unworthy of his care,
The Lord will my desire perform,
And grant me all my pray'r.

XXV. *Rejoice the Soul of thy Servant.*

1 When my pray'rs are a burden and task,
No wonder I little receive;
O Lord, make me willing to ask,
Since thou art so ready to give:
Although I am bought with thy blood,
And all thy salvation is mine:
At a distance from thee, my chief good,
I wander, and languish, and pine.

2 Of thy goodness of old, when I read,
To those who are sinners like me,
Why may I not wrestle and plead,
With them a partaker to be?
Thine arm is not shorten'd since then,
And those who believe in thy name,
Ever find thou art Yea and Amen,
Through all generations the same.

3 While my spirit within me is prest
With sorrow, temptation, and fear,
Like John, I would flee to thy breast,*
And pour my complaints in thine ear:
How happy and favour'd was he,
Who could on thy bosom repose!
Might this favour be granted to me,
I'd smile at the rage of my foes.

4 I have heard of thy wonderful name,
How great and exalted thou art;
But, ah! I confess, to my shame,
It faintly impresses my heart:
The beams of thy glory display,
As Peter once saw thee appear;
That, transported like him, I may say,
"It is good for my soul to be here."†

5 What a sorrow and weight didst thou feel,
When nail'd, for my sake, to the tree!
My heart, sure, is harder than steel,
To feel no more sorrow for thee:
Oh! let me, with Thomas, descry
The wounds in thy hands and thy side,
And have feelings like his, when I cry,
"My God and my Saviour has dy'd!"‡

* John, xiii. 25. † Matth. xvii. 4. ‡ John, xx. 28.

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6 But if thou hast appointed me still
To wrestle, and suffer, and fight,
O make me resign to thy will,
For all thine appointments are right,
This mercy, at least, I entreat,
That, knowing how vile I have been,
I, with MARY, may wait at thy feet,*
And weep o'er the pardon of sin.

XXVI. C. *Self-acquaintance.*

1 DEAR Lord! accept a sinful heart,
Which of itself complains,
And mourns, with much and frequent smart,
The evil it contains.

2 There fiery seeds of anger lurk,
Which often hurt my frame;
And wait but for the tempter's work
To fan them to a flame.

3 Legality holds out a bribe
To purchase life from thee;
And discontent would fain prescribe
How thou shalt deal with me.

4 While unbelief withstands thy grace,
And puts thy mercy by,
Presumption, with a brow of brass,
Says, "Give me, or I die."

5 How eager are my thoughts to roam
In quest of what they love!
But ah! when duty calls them home,
How heavily they move!

6 Oh, cleanse me in a Saviour's blood,
Transform me by thy pow'r,
And make me thy belov'd abode,
And let me rove no more!

XXVII. *Bitter and Sweet.*

1 KINDLE, Saviour, in my heart,
A flame of love divine;
Here, for mine I trust thou art,
And sure I would be thine:
If my soul has felt thy grace,
If to me thy name is known,
Why should trifles fill the place
Due to thyself alone?

2 'Tis a strange, mysterious life
I live from day to day;
Light and darkness, peace and strife,
Bear an alternate sway:
When I think the battle won,
I have to fight it o'er again;
When I say I'm overthrown,
Relief I soon obtain.

3 Often, at the mercy-seat,
While calling on thy name,
Swarms of evil thoughts I meet,
Which fill my soul with shame.
Agitated in my mind,
Like a feather in the air,
Can I thus a blessing find?
My soul, can this be pray'r?

4 But when Christ, my Lord and Friend,
Is pleas'd to show his pow'r;
All at once my troubles end,
And I've a golden hour;
Then I see his smiling face,
Feel the pledge of joys to come;
Often, Lord, repeat this grace,
Till thou shalt call me home.

XXVIII. C. *Prayer for Patience.*

1 LORD, who hast suffer'd all for me,
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter cross I bear for thee,
Help me with patience to endure.

2 The storm of loud repining hush,
I would in humble silence mourn;
Why should th' unburnt, though burning bush,
Be angry as the crackling thorn?

* Luke, vii. 38.

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3 Man should not faint at thy rebuke,
Like Joshua, falling on his face,*
When the curs'd thing that Achan took
Brought Israel into just disgrace.

4 Perhaps some golden wedge, suppress'd,
Some secret thing offends my God;
Perhaps that Babylonish vest, [rod.
Self-righteousness, provokes the

5 Ah! were I buffetted all day,
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns, and spit upon,
I yet should have no right to say,
My great distress is mine alone.

5 Let me not angrily declare
No pain was ever sharp like mine;
Nor murmur at the cross I bear,
But rather weep, rememb'ring thine.

XXIX. C. *Submission.*

1 O Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to thy will,
And make thy pleasure mine.

2 Why should I shrink at thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears?
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

3 No, let me rather freely yield
What most I prize to thee;
Who never hast a good withheld,
Or wilt withhold from me.

4 Thy favour, all my journey through,
Thou art engag'd to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

5 Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor, blind creature of a day,
And crush'd before the moth!

6 But ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still bind me to thy sway;
Else the next cloud that veils my skies
Drives all these thoughts away.

XXX. *Why should I complain?*

1 When my Saviour, my Shepherd, is near,
How quickly my sorrows depart!
New beauties around me appear,
New spirits enliven my heart:
His presence gives peace to my soul,
And Satan assaults me in vain;
While my Shepherd his power controls,
I think I no more shall complain.

2 But, alas! what a change do I find,
When my Shepherd withdraws from my sight!
My fears all return to my mind,
My day is soon chang'd into night:
Then Satan his effort renews
To vex and ensnare me again:
All my pleasing enjoyments I lose,
And can only lament and complain.

3 By these changes I often pass thro',
I am taught my own weakness to know: [do,
I am taught what my Shepherd can
And how much to his mercy I owe:
It is he that supports me through all;
When I faint he revives me again;
He attends to my prayer when I call,
And bids me no longer complain.

4 Wherefore, then, should I murmur and grieve? [same,
Since my Shepherd is always the
And has promis'd he never will leave† [name:
The soul that confides in his
To relieve me from all that I fear,
He was buffetted, tempted, and slain;
And at length he will surely appear,
Tho' he leaves me a while to complain.

* Joshua, vii. 10, 11.

† Jer. i. 19.

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5 While I dwell in an enemy's land,
Can I hope to be always in peace?
'Tis enough that my Shepherd's at hand, [cease;
And that shortly this warfare will
For ere long he will bid me remove*
From this region of sorrow and pain,
To abide in his presence above,
And then I no more shall complain.

XXXI. *Return, O Lord, how long.*

1 Return to bless my waiting eyes,
And cheer my mourning heart, O Lord!
Without thee, all beneath the skies
No real pleasure can afford.

2 When thy lov'd presence meets my sight,
It softens care and sweetens toil;
The Sun shines forth with double light,
The whole creation wears a smile.

3 Upon thine arm of love I rest,
Thy gracious voice forbids my fear; [breast,
No storms disturb my peaceful
Nor foes assault, when thou art near.

4 But, ah! since thou hast been away,
Nothing but trouble have I known;
And Satan marks me for his prey,
Because he sees me left alone.

5 My sun is hid, my comforts lost,
My graces droop, my sins revive;
Distress'd, dismay'd, and tempest-toss'd,
My soul is only just alive!

6 Lord, hear my cry, and come again!
Put all mine enemies to shame;
And let them see 'tis not in vain
That I have trusted in thy name.

XXXII. *Cast down, but not destroyed.*

1 Though sore beset with guilt and fear,
I cannot, dare not, quite despair;
If I must perish, would the Lord
Have taught my heart to love his word?
Would he have giv'n me eyes to see
My danger, and my remedy;
Reveal'd his name, and bid me pray,
Had he resolv'd to say me nay?†

2 No—though cast down, I am not slain;
I fall, but I shall rise again;‡
The present, Satan, is thy hour,
But Jesus shall control thy pow'r:
His love will plead for my relief,
He hears my groans, he sees my grief;
Nor will he suffer thee to boast,
A soul that sought his help was lost.

3 'Tis true, I have unfaithful been,
And griev'd his spirit by my sin;
Yet still his mercy he'll reveal,
And all my wounds and follies heal:
Abounding sin, I must confess,
But more abounding is his grace;§
He once vouchsaf'd for me to bleed,
And now he lives my cause to plead.

4 I'll cast myself before his feet,
I see him on his mercy-seat,
('Tis sprinkled with atoning blood;)
There sinners find access to God:
Ye burden'd souls, approach with me,
And make the Saviour's name your plea;
Jesus will pardon all who come,
And strike our fierce accuser dumb.

*Rev. ii. 10. †Judges, xiii. 23. ‡Micah, viii 8. §Rom. v. 20.

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XXXIII. *The benighted Traveller.*

1 Forest beasts, that live by prey,
Seldom show themselves by day;
But when day-light is withdrawn,*
Then they rove and roar till dawn.

2 Who can tell the trav'ller's fears,
When their horrid yells he hears?
Terror almost stops his breath,
While each step he looks for death.

3 Thus, when Jesus is in view,
Cheerful I my way pursue;
Walking by my Saviour's light,
Nothing can my soul affright.

4 But, when he forbears to shine,
Soon the trav'ller's case is mine;
Lost, benighted, struck with dread,
What a painful path I tread!

5 Then my soul with terror hears
Worse than lions, wolves or bears,
Roaring loud in ev'ry part,
Through the forest of my heart.

6 Wrath, impatience, envy, pride,
Satan, and his host beside,
Press around me to devour;
How can I escape their pow'r?

7 Gracious Lord, afford me light,
Put these beasts of prey to flight;
Let thy pow'r and love be shown;†
Save me, for I am thine own.

XXXIV. *The Prisoner.*

1 When the poor pris'ner, through a grate,
Sees others walk at large,
How does he mourn his lonely state,
And long for a discharge!

2 Thus I, confin'd in unbelief,
My loss of freedom mourn;
And spend my hours in fruitless grief,
Until my Lord return.

3 The beam of day, which pierces through
The gloom in which I dwell,
Only discloses to my view
The horrors of my cell.

4 Ah! how my pensive spirit faints,
To think of former days!
When I could triumph with the saints,
And join their songs of praise.

5 But now my joys are all cut off,
In prison I am cast;
And Satan, with a cruel scoff,
Says, "Where's your God at last?"‡

6 Dear Saviour, for thy mercy's sake,
My strong, my only plea,
These gates and bars in pieces break,
And set the pris'ner free!§

7 Surely my soul shall sing to thee,
For liberty restor'd;
And all thy saints admire to see
The mercies of the Lord.

XXXV. *Perplexity relieved.*

1 Uncertain how the way to find
Which to salvation led,
I listen'd long, with anxious mind,
To hear what others said.

2 When some of joys and comforts told,
I fear'd that I was wrong;
For I was stupid, dead, and cold,
Had neither joy nor song.

3 The Lord my lab'ring heart reliev'd,
And made my burden light;
Then, for a moment, I believ'd,
Supposing all was right.

4 Of fierce temptations others talk'd,
Of anguish and dismay,
Through what distresses they had walk'd
Before they found the way.

* Psalm civ. 20. † Psalm cxix. 94. ‡ Psalm cxv. 2. § Psalm cliii. 7.

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5 Ah! then I thought my hopes were vain,
For I had liv'd at ease;
I wish'd for all my fears again,
To make me more like these.

6 I had my wish; the Lord disclos'd
The evils of my heart,
And left my naked soul expos'd
To Satan's fiery dart.

7 Alas! "I now must give it up"
I cry'd, in deep despair;
How could I dream of drawing hope,
From what I cannot bear!

8 Again my Saviour brought me aid,
And when he set me free,
"Trust simply on my word," he said,
"And leave the rest to me."

XXXVI. *Prayer answered by Crosses.*

1 I ASK'D the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and ev'ry grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly his face.

2 'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answer' pray'r;
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

3 I hop'd that in some favour'd hour,
At once he'd answer my request;
And, by his love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

4 Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry pow'rs of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.

5 Yea more, with his own hand he seem'd
Intent to aggravate my wo;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schem'd,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

6 Lord, why is this, I trembling cry'd,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"'Tis in this way," the Lord reply'd,
"I answer pray'r for grace and faith.

7 "These inward trials I employ,
"From self and pride to set thee free;
"And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
"That thou may'st seek thy all in me."

XXXVII. *I will trust, and not be afraid.*

1 BEGONE, unbelief,
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will surely appear:
By pray'r let me wrestle,
And he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.

2 Though dark be my way,
Since he is my guide
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis his to provide;
Though cisterns be broken,
And creatures all fail,
The word he has spoken
Shall surely prevail.

3 His love in times past
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer
I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure
To help me quite through.

4 Determin'd to save,
He watch'd o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death;
And can he have taught me
To trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me,
To put me to shame?

5 Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less:
The heirs of salvation,
I know from his word,
Through much tribulation
Must follow their Lord.*

* Acts, xiv. 22.

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6 How bitter that cup,
No heart can conceive,
Which he drank quite up,
That sinners might live!
His way was much rougher
And darker than mine;
Did Jesus thus suffer,
And shall I repine?

7 Since all that I meet
Shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet,
The med'cine is food;
Though painful at present,
'Twill cease before long,
And then, oh! how pleasant
The conqueror's song!*

XXXVIII. *Questions to Unbelief.*

1 If to Jesus, for relief,
My soul has fled by pray'r,
Why should I give way to grief,
Or heart-consuming care?
Are not all things in his hand?
Has he not his promise past?
Will he then regardless stand,
And let me sink at last?

2 While I know his providence
Disposes each event,
Shall I judge by feeble sense,
And yield to discontent?
If he worms and sparrows feed,
Clothe the grass in rich array,†
Can he see a child in need,
And turn his eye away?

3 When his name was quite unknown,
And sin my life employ'd,
Then he watch'd me as his own,
Or I had been destroy'd:
Now his mercy-seat I know,
Now, by grace, am reconcil'd;
Would he spare me while a foe,
To leave me when a child?‡

4 If he all my wants supply'd,
When I disdain'd to pray,
Now his Spirit is my guide,
How can he say me nay?
If he would not give me up
When my soul against him fought,
Will he disappoint the hope
Which he himself has wrought?

5 If he shed his precious blood
To bring me to his fold,
Can I think that meaner good
He ever will withhold?§
Satan, vain is thy device!
Here my hopes rest well assur'd,
In that great redemption-price,
I see the whole secur'd.

XXXIX. *Great Effects by weak Means.*

1 Unbelief the soul dismays;
What objections will it raise!
But true faith securely leans
On the promise, in the means.

2 If to faith it once be known,
God has said, "It shall be done,
"And in this appointed way;"
Faith has then no more to say.

3 Moses' rod, by faith uprear'd,
Through the sea a path prepar'd;‖
Jericho's devoted wall
At the trumpet's sound must fall.¶

4 With a pitcher and a lamp,
Gideon overthrew a camp;**
And a stone, well aim'd by faith,
Prov'd the arm'd Philistine's death.††

5 Thus the Lord is pleas'd to try
Those who on his help rely;
By the means he makes it known,
That the pow'r is all his own.

6 Yet the means are not in vain,
If the end we would obtain;
Though the breath of pray'r be weak,
None shall find but they who seek.

7 God alone the heart can reach,
Yet the ministers must preach;
'Tis their part the seed to sow,
And 'tis his to make it grow.

* Rom. viii. 37. † Matth. vi. 26. ‡ Rom. v. 10. § Rom. viii. 32. ‖ Exod. xiv. 21.
¶ Joshua, vi. 20. ** Judges, vii. 22. †† 1 Sam. xvii. 49.

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XL. *Why art thou cast down?*

1 Be still, my heart! these anxious cares [snares;
To thee are burdens, thorns and
They cast dishonour on thy Lord,
And contradict his gracious word.

2 Brought safely by his hand thus far,
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want if he provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

3 When first, before his mercy-seat,
Thou didst to him thy all commit,
He gave thee warrant from that hour,
To trust his wisdom, love, and pow'r.

4 Did ever trouble yet befall,
And he refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise past,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

5 Like David, thou may'st comfort draw,
Sav'd from the bear's and lion's paw;
Goliath's rage I may defy,
For God, my Saviour, still is nigh.

6 He who has help'd me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through,
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to his praise.

7 Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads thee home apace to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heav'n will make amends for all.

XLI. *The Way of Access.*

1 One glance of thine, eternal Lord,
Pierces all nature through;
Nor heav'n, nor earth, nor hell, afford
A shelter from thy view!

2 The mighty whole, each smaller part,
At once before thee lies;
And ev'ry thought of ev'ry heart
Is open to thine eyes.

3 Though greatly from myself conceal'd,
Thou se'st my inward frame;
To thee I always stand reveal'd
Exactly as I am.

4 Since, therefore, I can hardly bear
What in myself I see,
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to thee?

5 But since my Saviour stands between,
In garments dy'd in blood,
'Tis he, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

6 Thus, though a sinner, I am safe
He pleads, before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins his own.

7 What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are his,
And his obedience mine.*

XLII. *The Pilgrim's Song.*

1 From Egypt lately freed
By the Redeemer's grace,
A rough and thorny path we tread,
In hopes to see his face.

2 The flesh dislikes the way,
But faith approves it well;
This only leads to endless day,
All others lead to hell.

3 The promis'd land of peace
Faith keeps in constant view;
How diff'rent from the wilderness
We now are passing through!

4 Here often from our eyes
Clouds hide the light divine;
There we shall have unclouded skies,
Our Sun will always shine.

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

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5 Here griefs, and cares, and pains,
And fears, distress us sore;
But there eternal pleasure reigns,
And we shall weep no more.

6 Lord, pardon our complaints,
We follow at thy call;
The joy prepar'd for suff'ring saints
Will make amends for all.

IV. COMFORT.

XLIII. *Faith a new and comprehensive Sense.*

1 Sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell,
Are gifts we highly prize;
But faith doth singly each excel,
And all the five comprise.

2 More piercing than the eagle's sight,
It views the world unknown,
Surveys the glorious realms of light,
And Jesus on the throne.

3 It hears the mighty voice of God,
And ponders what he saith;
His word and works, his gifts and rod,
Have each a voice to faith.

4 It feels the touch of heavenly pow'r,*
And from that boundless source,
Derives fresh vigour ev'ry hour
To run its daily course.

5 The truth and goodness of the Lord
Are suited to its taste;†
Mean is the worldling's pamper'd board,
To faith's perpetual feast.

6 It smells the dear Redeemer's name
Like ointment poured forth;‡
Faith only knows, or can proclaim,
Its savour or its worth.

7 Till saving faith possess the mind,
In vain of sense we boast;
We are but senseless, tasteless, blind,
And deaf, and dead and lost.

XLIV. C. *The Happy Change.*

1 How blest thy creature is, O God,
When, with a single eye,
He views the lustre of thy word,
The day-spring from on high!

2 Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things;
The Sun of righteousness he eyes,
With healing on his wings.

3 Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad.
Where serpents lurk'd before.§

4 The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heav'nly reign.

5 The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first, obedient to thy word,
He started from the goal,

6 Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

XLV. C. *Retirement.*

1 Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes were Satan wages still
His most successful war.

2 The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With pray'r and praise agree;
And seem by thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow thee.

* Luke, viii. 46. † Psalm cxix. 103. ‡ Solomon's Song, i. 3. § Isa. xxxv. 7.

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3 There if thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what peace, and joy and love,
She communes with her God!

4 There, like the nightingale, she pours
Her solitary lays;
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

5 Author and Guardian of my life,
Sweet source of light divine,
And, (all harmonious names in one,)
My Saviour, thou art mine!

6 What thanks I owe thee, and what love,
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above
When time shall be no more.

XLVI. JESUS *my all.*

1 WHY should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempter's pow'r?
JESUS vouchsafes to be my tow'r.

2 Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either flee or yield,
Since JESUS is my mighty shield?

3 When creature-comforts fade and die,
Worldlings may weep; but why should I?
JESUS still lives, and still is nigh.

4 Though all the flocks and herds were dead,
My soul a famine need not dread,
For JESUS is my living bread.

5 I know not what may soon betide,
Or how my wants shall be supply'd;
But JESUS knows, and will provide.

6 Though sin would fill me with distress,
The throne of grace I dare address,
For JESUS is my righteousness.

7 Though faint my pray'rs, and cold my love,
My steadfast hope shall not remove,
While JESUS intercedes above.

8 Against me earth and hell combine;
But on my side is pow'r divine;
JESUS is all, and he is mine.

XLVII. C. *The Hidden Life.*

1 To tell the Saviour all my wants,
How pleasing is the task!
Nor less to praise him when he grants
Beyond what I can ask.

2 My lab'ring spirit vainly seeks
To tell but half the joy;
With how much tenderness he speaks,
And helps me to reply.

3 Nor were it wise, nor should I choose
Such secrets to declare;
Like precious wines, their taste they lose
Expos'd to open air.

4 But this with boldness I proclaim;
Nor care if thousands hear,
Sweet is the ointment of his name,
Not life is half so dear.

5 And can you frown, my former friends,
Who knew what once I was;
And blame the song that thus commends
The man who bore the cross?

6 Trust me, I draw the likeness true,
And not as fancy paints;
Such honour may he give to you,
For such have all his saints.

XLVIII. *Joy and Peace in believing.*

1 SOMETIMES a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord, who rises
With healing in his wings:
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul, again,
A season of clear shining,
To cheer it after rain.

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2 In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new:
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let the unknown to-morrow*
Bring with it what it may.

3 It can bring with it nothing
But he will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing,
Will clothe his people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread.

4 Though vine nor fig-tree neither
Their wanted fruit shall bear,
Though all the fields should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For while in him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.†

XLIX. C. *True Pleasures.*

1 Lord, my soul with pleasure springs,
When Jesus name I hear;
And when God the Spirit brings
The word of promise near:
Beauties, too, in holiness,
Still, delighted, I perceive;
Nor have words that can express
The joys thy precepts give.

2 Cloth'd in sanctity and grace,
How sweet it is to see
Those who love thee, as they pass,
Or when they wait on thee!
Pleasant, too, to sit and tell
What we owe to love divine;
Till our bosoms grateful swell,
And eyes begin to shine.

3 Those the comforts I possess,
Which God shall still increase,
All his ways are pleasantness,
And all his paths are peace.‡
Nothing Jesus did or spoke,
Henceforth let me ever slight;
For I love his easy yoke,
And find his burden light.‖

L. C. *The Christian.*

1 Honour and happiness unite
To make the Christian's name a praise:
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
That fills the remnant of his days!

2 A kingly character he bears,
No change his priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown he wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

4 Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon his face;
His robe is of th' ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

4 Inferior honours he disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth;
The King of kings himself maintains
The expenses of his heav'nly birth.

5 The noblest creature seen below,
Ordain'd to fill a throne above;
God gives him all he can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

6 My soul is ravish'd at the thought!
Methinks from earth I see him rise;
Angels congratulate his lot,
And shout him welcome to the skies!

LI. C. *Lively Hope and Gracious Fear.*

1 I was a grov'ling creature once,
And basely cleav'd to earth;
I wanted spirit to renounce
The clod that gave me birth.

* Matth. vi. 34. † Habakkuk, iii. 17, 18. ‡ Prov. iii. 17. ‖ Matth. xi. 30.

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2 But God has breath'd upon a worm,
And sent me, from above, [form,
Wings, such as clothe an angel's
The wings of joy and love.

3 With these, to Pisgah's top I fly,
And there, delighted, stand,
To view, beneath a shining sky,
The spacious promis'd land.

4 The Lord of all the vast domain
Has promis'd it to me;
The length and breadth of all the plain,
As far as faith can see.

5 How glorious is my privilege!
To thee for help I call;
I stand upon a mountain's edge,
Oh save me, lest I fall!

6 Though much exalted in the Lord,
My strength is not my own;
Then let me tremble at his word,
And none shall cast me down.

LII. *Confidence.*

1 Yes! since God himself has said it,
On the promise I rely:
His good word demands my credit,
What can unbelief reply?
He is strong, and can fulfil;
He is truth, and therefore will.

2 As to all the doubts and questions
Which my spirit often grieve,
These are Satan's sly suggestions,
And I need no answer give:
He would fain destroy my hope,
But the promise bears it up.

3 Sure the Lord thus far has brought me
By his watchful tender care;
Sure 'tis he himself has taught me
How to seek his face by pray'r:
After so much mercy past,
Will he give me up at last?

4 True, I've been a foolish creature,
And have sinn'd against his grace;
But forgiveness is his nature,
Though he justly hides his face:
Ere he call'd me, well he knew
What a heart like mine would do.*

5 In my Saviour's intercession,
Therefore, I will still confide;
Lord, accept my free confession,
I have sinn'd, but thou hast dy'd:†
This is all I have to plead,
This is all the plea I need.

LIII. *Peace restored.*

1 Oh, speak that gracious word again,
And cheer my drooping heart,
No voice but thine can sooth my pain,
Or bid my fears depart.

2 And canst thou still vouchsafe to own
A wretch so vile as I?
And may I still approach thy throne,
And Abba, Father, cry?

3 Oh, then let saints and angels join,
And help me to proclaim [mine,
The grace that heal'd a breach like
And put my foes to shame!

4 How oft did Satan's cruel boast
My troubled soul affright!
He told me I was surely lost,
And God had left me quite.‡

5 Guilt made me fear, lest all were true
The lying tempter said;
But now the Lord appears in view,
My enemy is fled.

6 My Saviour, by his pow'rful word,
Has turn'd my night to day;
And his salvation's joys restor'd,
Which I had sinn'd away.

* Isa. xlviii. 8. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ Psalm lxxi. 11.

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7 Dear Lord, I wonder and adore,
Thy grace is all divine;
Oh keep me, that I sin no more
Against such love as thine!

LIV. *Hear what he has done for my Soul.*

1 Sav'd by blood, I live to tell [done;
What the love of Christ hath
He redeem'd my soul from hell,
Of a rebel made a son:
Oh, I tremble still, to think
How secure I liv'd in sin;
Sporting on destruction's brink,
Yet preserv'd from falling in.

2 In his own appointed hour,
To my heart the Saviour spoke:
Touch'd me by his Spirits' pow'r,
And my dang'rous slumber broke.
Then I saw and own'd my guilt:
Soon my gracious Lord reply'd,
"Fear not, I my blood have spilt,
"'Twas for such as thee I dy'd."

3 Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd my heart;
Can I hope thy grace to prove
After acting such a part?
"Thou hast greatly sinn'd," he said,
"But I freely all forgive;
"I myself thy debt have paid,
"Now I bid thee rise and live."

4 Come, my fellow-sinners, try;
Jesus' heart is full of love!
Oh, that you, as well as I,
May his wondrous mercy prove!
He has sent me to declare,
All is ready, all is free:
Why should any soul despair,
When he sav'd a wretch like me?

LV. *Freedom from Care.*

1 While I liv'd without the Lord,
(If I might be said to live,)
Nothing could relief afford,
Nothing satisfaction give.

2 Empty hopes and groundless fear
Mov'd, by turns, my anxious mind;
Like a feather in the air,
Made the sport of ev'ry wind.

3 Now, I see, whate'er betide,
All is well, if Christ be mine;
He has promis'd to provide,
I have only to resign.

4 When a sense of sin and thrall
Forc'd me to the sinner's Friend,
He engag'd to manage all,
By the way, and to the end.

5 "Cast," he said, "on me thy care,*
"'Tis enough that I am nigh;
"I will all thy burdens bear,
"I will all thy wants supply.

6 "Simply follow as I lead;
"Do not reason, but believe;
"Call on me in time of need,
"Thou shall surely help receive."

7 Lord, I would, I do submit,
Gladly yield my all to thee;
What thy wisdom sees most fit,
Must be, surely, best for me.

8 Only when the way is rough,
And the coward flesh would start,
Let thy promise and thy love
Cheer and animate my heart.

LVI. *Humiliation and Praise.*

(Imitated from the German.)

1 When the wounded spirit hears
The voice of Jesus' blood,
How the message stops the tears
Which else in vain had flow'd:
Pardon, grace, and peace, proclaim'd,
And the sinner call'd a child;
Then the stubborn heart is tam'd,
Renew'd, and reconcil'd.

* Psalm lv. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7.

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2 Oh! 'twas grace indeed, to spare
And save a wretch like me!
Men or angels could not bear
What I have offer'd thee:
Were thy bolts at their command,
Hell, ere now, had been my place:
Thou alone couldst silent stand,
And wait to show thy grace.

3 If, in one created mind,
The tenderness and love
Of thy saints on earth were join'd,
With all the hosts above;
Still that love were weak and poor,
If compar'd, my Lord, with thine:
Far too scanty to endure
A heart so vile as mine.

4 Wondrous mercy I have found,
But, ah! how faint my praise!
Must I be a cumber-ground,
Unfruitful all my days?
Do I in thy garden grow,
Yet produce thee only leaves!
Lord, forbid it should be so!
The thought my spirit grieves.

5 Heavy charges Satan brings
To fill me with distress;
Let me hide beneath thy wings,
And plead thy righteousness.
Lord, to thee for help I call,
'Tis thy promise bids me come;
Tell him thou hast paid for all,
And that shall strike him dumb.

LVII. C. *For the Poor.*

1 When Hagar found the bottle spent,
And wept o'er Ishmael;
A message from the Lord was sent
To guide her to a well.*

2 Should not Elijah's cake and cruise†
Convince us, at this day,
A gracious God will not refuse
Provisions by the way?

3 His saints and servants shall be fed,
The promise is secure;
"Bread shall be giv'n them," as he said,
"Their water shall be sure."‡

4 Repasts far richer, they shall prove,
Than all earth's dainties are;
'Tis sweet to taste a Saviour's love,
Though in the meanest fare.

5 To Jesus then your trouble bring,
Nor murmur at your lot;
While you are poor, and he is King,
You shall not be forgot.

LVIII. *Home in View.*

1 As when the weary trav'ller gains
The height of some o'erlooking hill,
His heart revives, if cross the plains
He eyes his home, though distant still.

2 While he surveys the much-lov'd spot,
He slights the space which lies between;
His past fatigues are now forgot,
Because his journey's end is seen.

3 Thus, when the Christian pilgrim views,
By faith, his mansion in the skies,
The sight his fainting strength renews,
And wings his speed to reach the prize:

4 The thought of home his spirit cheers,
No more he grieves for troubles past;
Nor any future trial fears,
So he may safe arrive at last.§

5 'Tis there, he says, I am to dwell,
With Jesus, in the realms of day;
Then I shall bid my cares farewell,
And he will wipe my tears away.

6 Jesus, on thee our hope depends,
To lead us on to thine abode:
Assur'd our home will make amends
For all our toil while on the road.

* Gen. xxi. 19. † 1 Kings, xvii. 14. ‡ Isa. xxxiii. 16. § Acts, xx. 24.

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V. DEDICATION AND SURRENDER.

LIX. *Old Things are passed away.*

1 Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admir'd its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.

2 Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

3 As by the light of op'ning day
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

4 Creatures no more divide my choice,
I bid them all depart; [voice,
His name, and love, and gracious
Have fix'd my roving heart.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
And wholly live to thee;
But may I hope that thou wilt own
A worthless worm like me?

6 Yes! though of sinner's I'm the worst,
I cannot doubt thy will;
For if thou hadst not lov'd me first,
I had refus'd thee still.*

LX. *The Power of Grace.*

1 Happy the birth where grace presides
To form the future life!
In wisdom's path the soul she guides,
Remote from noise and strife.

2 Since I have known the Saviour's name,
And what for me he bore;
No more I toil for empty fame,
I thirst for gold no more.

3 Plac'd by his hand in this retreat,
I make his love my theme;
And see that all the world calls great
Is but a waking dream.

4 Since he has rank'd my worthless name
Amongst his favour'd few,
Let the mad world who scoff at them,
Revile and hate me too.

5 O thou, whose voice the dead can raise,
And soften hearts of stone,
And teach the dumb to sing thy praise,
This work is all thine own.

6 Thy wond'ring saints rejoice to see
A wretch like me restor'd;
And point, and say, "How chang'd is he,
"Who once defy'd the Lord!"

7 Grace bid me live, and taught my tongue
To aim at notes divine;
And grace accepts my feeble song,
The glory, Lord, be thine!

LXI. C. *My Soul thirsteth for God.*

1 I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

2 It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem, as dross,
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

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3 I want that grace that springs from thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn, like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

4 Dear Fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream!

5 For sure, of all the plants that share
The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to his care,
Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

LXII. C. *Love constraining to Obedience.*

1 No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright;
And what she has, she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

2 How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

3 Then to abstain from outward sin,
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its pow'r within,
I feel I hate it too.

4 Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

5 "What shall I do," was then the word,
"That I may worthier grow?"
"What shall I render to the Lord?"
Is my inquiry now.

6 To see the law by Christ fulfill'd,
And hear his pard'ning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.*

LXIII. C. *The Heart healed and changed by Mercy.*

1 Sin enslav'd me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till, at length, a thousand fears
Came swarming o'er my mind.
"Where," I said, in deep distress,
"Will these sinful pleasures end?
"How shall I secure my peace,
"And make the Lord my friend?"

2 Friends and ministers said much,
The Gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watch'd, and strove,
Scarce would show my face abroad,
Fear'd, almost, to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

3 Thus afraid to trust his grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till, despairing of my case,
Down at his feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart he broke,
And subdu'd me to his sway
By a simple word he spoke,
"Thy sins are done away."

LXIV. C. *Hatred of Sin.*

1 Holy Lord God! I love thy truth,
Nor dare thy least commandment slight;
Yet, pierc'd by sin, the serpent's tooth,
I mourn the anguish of the bite.

2 But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait;
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.

* Rom. iii. 31.

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3 Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell;
One sin, unslain, within my breast,
Would make that heav'n as dark as hell.

4 The pris'ner, sent to breathe fresh air,
And bless'd with liberty again,
Would mourn, were he condemn'd to wear
One link of all his former chain.

5 But, oh! no foe invades the bliss,
When glory crowns the Christian's head;
One view of Jesus as he is,
Will strike all sin for ever dead.

LXV. *The Child.**

1 Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from art,
Make me as a weaned child:
From distrust and envy free,
Pleas'd with all that pleases thee.

2 What thou shalt to-day provide,
Let me as a child receive;
What to-morrow may betide,
Calmly to thy wisdom leave:
'Tis enough that thou wilt care,
Why should I the burden bear?

3 As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own;
Knows he's neither strong nor wise;
Fears to stir a step alone;
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, Guard, and Guide.

4 Thus preserv'd from Satan's wiles,
Safe from dangers, free from fears,
May I live upon thy smiles,
Till the promis'd hour appears,
When the sons of God shall prove
All their Father's boundless love.

LXVI. *True Happiness.*

1 Fix my heart and eyes on thine!
What are other objects worth?
But to see thy glory shine,
Is a heav'n begun on earth:
Trifles can no longer move,
Oh! I tread on all beside,
When I feel my Saviour's love,
And remember how he dy'd.

2 Now my search is at an end,
Now my wishes rove no more!
Thus my moments I would spend,
Love, and wonder, and adore:
Jesus, source of excellence!
All thy glorious love reveal!
Kingdoms shall not bribe me hence,
While this happiness I feel.

3 Take my heart, 'tis all thine own,
To thy will my spirit frame?
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone,
Over all I have, or am:
If a foolish thought shall dare
To rebel against thy word,
Slay it, Lord, and do not spare;
Let it feel thy Spirit's sword.

4 Making thus the Lord my choice,
I have nothing more to choose,
But to listen to thy voice,
And my will in thine to lose:
Thus, whatever may betide,
I shall safe and happy be;
Still content and satisfy'd,
Having all, in having thee.

LXVII. *The Happy Debtor.*

1 Ten thousand talents once I ow'd,
And nothing had to pay;
But Jesus freed me from the load,
And wash'd my debt away.

2 Yet since the Lord forgave my sin,
And blotted out my score,
Much more indebted I have been,
Than e'er I was before.

* Psalm cxxxi. 2. Matth. xviii. 3, 4.

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3 My guilt is cancell'd quite, I know,
And satisfaction made;
But the vast debt of love I owe,
Can never be repaid.

4 The love I owe for sin forgiv'n,
For power to believe, [heav'n,
For present peace, and promis'd
No angel can conceive.

5 That love of thine, thou sinner's Friend!
Witness thy bleeding heart!
My little all can ne'er extend
To pay a thousandth part.

6 Nay, more, the poor returns I make
I first from thee obtain;*
And 'tis of grace, that thou wilt take
Such poor returns again.

7 'Tis well—it shall my glory be,
(Let who will boast their store,)
In time, and to eternity,
To owe thee more and more.

VI. CAUTIONS.

LXVIII. C. *The New Convert.*

1 The new-born child of Gospel grace,
Like some fair tree when summer's nigh,
Beneath Immanuel's shining face,
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

2 No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his faith employs,
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys.

3 But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sinking day by day;
What seem'd his own, a self-fed spring, [away.
Proves but a brook that glides

4 When Gideon arm'd his num'rous host, less;
The Lord soon made his numbers
And said, lest Israel vainly boast,†
"My arm procur'd me this success."

5 Thus will he bring our spirits down,
And draw our ebbing comforts low, [own,
That, sav'd by grace, but not our
We may not claim the praise we owe.

LXIX. C. *True and false Comforts.*

1 O God, whose favourable eye
The sin-sick soul revives,
Holy and heav'nly is the joy
Thy shining presence gives.

2 Not such as hypocrites suppose,
Who, with a graceless heart,
Taste not of thee, but drink a dose
Prepar'd by Satan's art.

3 Intoxicating joys are theirs,
Who, while they boast their light,
And seem to soar above the stars,
Are plunging into night.

4 Lull'd in a soft and fatal sleep,
They sin, and yet rejoice;
Were they, indeed, the Saviour's sheep,
Would they not hear his voice?

5 Be mine the comforts that reclaim
The soul from Satan's pow'r;
That make me blush for what I am,
And hate my sin the more.

6 'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.

* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

† Judges, vii. 2.

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LXX. *True and false Zeal.*

1 Zeal is that pure and heav'nly flame
The fire of love supplies;
While that which often bears the name,
Is self, in a disguise.

2 True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear;
The false is headstrong, fierce, and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.

3 While zeal for truth the Christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

4 Zeal has attain'd its highest aim,
Its end is satisfy'd,
If sinners love the Saviour's name,
Nor seeks it aught beside.

5 But self, however well employ'd,
Has its own ends in view;
And says, as boasting Jehu cry'd,
"Come see what I can do."*

6 Self may its poor reward obtain,
And be applauded here;
But zeal the blest applause will gain
When Jesus shall appear.

7 Dear Lord, the idol, self, dethrone,
And from our hearts remove;
And let no zeal by us be shown
But that which springs from love.

LXXI. C. *A living and dead Faith.*

1 The Lord receives his highest praise
From humble minds and hearts sincere;
While all the loud professor says
Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

2 To walk as children of the day,
To mark the precepts' holy light,
To wage the warfare, watch and pray,
Show who are pleasing in his sight.

3 Not words alone it cost the Lord,
To purchase pardon for his own;
Nor will a soul, by grace restor'd,
Return the Saviour words alone.

4 With golden bells, the priestly vest,
And rich pomegranates border'd round†
The need of holiness express'd,
And call'd for fruit as well as sound.

5 Easy, indeed, it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve, instead of faith and love.

6 But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sov'reign grace
Unless that grace has made him free!

LXXII. C. *Abuse of the Gospel.*

1 Too many, Lord, abuse thy grace,
In this licentious day; [face,
And while they boast they see thy
They turn their own away.

2 Thy book displays a gracious light
That can the blind restore;
But these are dazzled by the sight,
And blinded still the more.

3 The pardon such presume upon
They do not beg, but steal;
And when they plead it at thy throne
Oh! where's the Spirit's seal?

4 Was it for this, ye lawless tribe,
The dear Redeemer bled?
Is this the grace the saints imbibe
From Christ, the living head?

* 2 Kings, x. 16.

† Exod. xxviii. 33.

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5 Ah, Lord, we know thy chosen few
Are fed with heav'nly fare;
But these, the wretched husks they chew
Proclaim them what they are.

6 The liberty our hearts implore
Is, not to live in sin,
But still to wait at Wisdom's door,
Till mercy calls us in.

LXXIII. C. *The narrow Way.*

1 What thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or choose it for their own.

2 A thousand ways in ruin end,
One, only, leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleas'd with a journey to the sky.

3 No more I ask or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;
Sorrow may well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

4 The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above;
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

5 Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms,
Contented lick your native dust;
But God shall fight, with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust.

LXXIV. C. *Dependence.*

1 To keep the lamp alive,
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

2 The Lord's unsparing hand
Supplies the living stream;
It is not at our own command,
But still deriv'd from him.

3 Beware of Peter's word,*
Nor confidently say,
"I never will deny thee, Lord,"
But "Grant I never may."

4 Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.

5 Retreat beneath his wings,
And in his grace confide;
This more exalts the King of kings
Than all your works beside.†

6 In Jesus is our store,
Grace issues from his throne;
Whoever says, "I want no more,"
Confesses he has none.

LXXV. C. *Not of Works.*

1 Grace, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone!
Come, and bow beneath her sway,
Cast your idol works away.
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride, (vain glorious worm!)
Are the best he can perform.

2 Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his pow'rs;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim.
But when God, the Judge, shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

* Matth. xxvi. 33.

† John, vi. 29.

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3 Still the boasting heart replies,
What! the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish ev'ry vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish ev'ry thing in man,
But the grace that never can.

LXXVI. *Sin's Deceit.*

1 Sin, when view'd by Scripture light,
Is a horrid, hateful sight;
But when seen in Satan's glass,
Then it wears a pleasing face.

2 When the Gospel trumpet sounds,
When I think how grace abounds,
When I feel sweet peace within,
Then I'd rather die than sin.

3 When the cross I view by faith,
Sin is madness, poison, death;
Tempt me not, 'tis all in vain,
Sure I ne'er can yield again.

4 Satan, for a while debarr'd,
When he finds me off my guard,
Puts his glass before my eyes;
Quickly other thoughts arise.

5 What before excited fears,
Rather pleasing now appears;
If a sin, it seems so small,
Or, perhaps, no sin at all.

6 Often thus, through sin's deceit,
Grief, and shame, and loss I meet;
Like a fish, my soul mistook,
Saw the bait, but not the hook.

7 O! my Lord, what shall I say?
How can I presume to pray?
Not a word have I to plead;
Sins like mine are black indeed!

8 Made, by past experience, wise,
Let me learn thy word to prize,
Taught by what I've felt before,
Let me Satan's glass abhor.

LXXVII. *Are there few that shall be saved?*

1 Destruction's dang'rous road
What multitudes pursue! [God
While that which leads the soul to
Is known or sought by few.

2 Believers enter in
By Christ, the living gate;
But they who will not leave their sin,
Complain it is too strait.

3 If self must be deny'd,
And sin forsaken quite, [wide,
They rather choose the way that's
And strive to think it right.

4 Encompass'd by a throng,
On numbers they depend;
So many, surely, can't be wrong,
And miss a happy end.

5 But numbers are no mark
That men will right be found;
A few were sav'd in Noah's ark,*
For many millions drown'd.

6 Obey the Gospel call,
And enter while you may;
The flock of Christ is always small,†
And none are safe but they.

7 Lord, open sinners' eyes,
Their awful state to see;
And make them, ere the storm arise,
To thee for safety flee.

LXXVIII. *The Sluggard.*

1 The wishes that the sluggard frames,‡
Of course must fruitless prove;
With folded arms, he stands and dreams,
But has no heart to move.

2 His field from others may be known,
The fence is broken through;
The ground with weeds is overgrown,
And no good crop in view.

* 1 Pet. iii. 20. † Luke. xii. 32. ‡ Prov. vi. 10. and xxiv. 30. and xxii. 13, and xx. 4.

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3 No hardship he, or toil, can bear,
No difficulty meet;
He wastes his hours at home, for fear
Of lions in the street.

4 What wonder, then, if sloth and sleep
Distress and famine bring!
Can he in harvest hope to reap
Who will not sow in spring?

5 'Tis often thus, in soul-concerns,
We Gospel-sluggards see;
Who, if a wish would serve their turns,
Might true believers be.

6 But when the preacher bids them watch,
And seek, and strive, and pray:*
At ev'ry poor excuse they catch,
"A lion in the way!"

7 To use the means of grace, how loth!
We call them still in vain;
They yield to their beloved sloth,
And fold their arms again.

8 Dear Saviour, let thy pow'r appear,
The outward call to aid;
These drowsy souls can only hear
The voice that wakes the dead.

LXXIX. *Not in Word, but in Power.*

1 How soon the Saviour's gracious call
Disarm'd the rage of bloody Saul:†
Jesus, the knowledge of thy name
Changes the lion to a lamb!

2 Zaccheus, when he knew the Lord,
What he had gain'd by wrong, restor'd;
And of the wealth he priz'd before,
He gave the half to feed the poor.‡

3 The woman who so vile had been,§
When brought to weep o'er pardon'd sin,
Was from her evil ways estrang'd,
And show'd that grace her heart had chang'd.

4 And can we think the pow'r of grace
Is lost, by change of time and place?
Then it was mighty, all allow,
And is it but a notion now?

5 Can they whom pride and passion sway,
Who Mammon and the world obey,
In envy or contention live,
Presume that they indeed believe?

6 True faith unites to Christ, the root,
By him producing holy fruit;
And they who no such fruit can show,
Still on the stock of nature grow.

7 Lord, let thy word effectual prove,
To work in us obedient love!
And may each one who hears it dread
A name to live, and yet be dead.‖

VII. PRAISE.

LXXX. C. *Praise for Faith.*

1 Of all the gifts thine hand bestows,
Thou giver of all good!
Not heav'n itself a richer knows
Than my Redeemer's blood.

2 Faith, too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

3 'Till thou thy teaching pow'r apply,
Our hearts refuse to see,
And, weak as a distemper'd eye,
Shut out the view of thee.

4 Blind to the merits of thy Son
What mis'ry we endure!
Yet fly that hand, from which alone
We could expect a cure.

5 We praise thee, and would praise thee more,
To thee our all we owe;
The precious Saviour, and the pow'r
That makes him precious too.

* 1 Cor. ix. 24. Luke, xiii. 24. † Acts, ix. 6. ‡ Luke, xix. 8. § Luke, vii. 47. ‖ Rev. iii. 1.

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LXXXI. C. *Grace and Providence.*

1 Almighty King! whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land;
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

2 Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourish'd by thy word;
Let soul and body praise the Lord.

3 My streams of outward comfort came
From him who built this earthly frame;
What'er I want, his bounty gives,
By whom my soul for ever lives.

4 Either his hand preserves from pain,
Or, if I feel it, heals again;
From Satan's malice shields my breast,
Or overrules it for the best.

5 Forgive the song that falls so low
Beneath the gratitude I owe!
It means thy praise, however poor;
And angels' songs can do no more.

LXXXII. *Praise for Redeeming Love.*

1 Let us love, and sing, and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name!
He has hush'd the law's loud thunder,
He has quench'd mount Sinai's flame:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He has brought us nigh to God.

2 Let us love the Lord who bought us,
Pity'd us when enemies,
Call'd us by his grace and taught us,
Gave us ears, and gave us eyes:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He presents our souls to God.

3 Let us sing, though fierce temptations
Threaten hard to bear us down!
For the Lord, our strong salvation,
Holds in view the conqu'ror's crown:*
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Soon will bring us home to God.

4 Let us wonder, grace and justice
Join, and point to mercy's store;
When, through grace, in Christ our trust is,
Justice smiles, and asks no more:
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Has secur'd our way to God.

5 Let us praise, and join the chorus
Of the saints enthron'd on high;
Here they trusted him before us,
Now their praises fill the sky;
"Thou hast wash'd us with thy blood,
"Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!"†

6 Hark! the name of Jesus sounded
Loud, from golden harps above!
Lord, we blush, and are confounded,
Faint our praises, cold our love!
Wash our souls and songs with blood,
For by thee we come to God.

LXXXIII. C. *I will Praise the Lord at all Times.*

1 Winter has a joy for me,
While the Saviour's charms I read,
Lowly, meek, from blemish free,
In the snow-drops' pensive head.

2 Spring returns, and brings along
Life-invigorating suns:
Hark! the turtle's plaintive song,
Seems to speak his dying groans!

3 Summer has a thousand charms,
All expressive of his worth;
'Tis his sun that lights and warms;
His the air that cools the earth.

4 Is not Autumn, too, to say
Something of a Saviour's grace?
Yes, the beams of milder day
Tell me of his smiling face.

* Rev. ii. 10.

† Rev. v. 9.

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5 Light appears with early dawn;
While the sun makes haste to rise,
See his bleeding beauties drawn.
On the blushes of the skies.

6 Ev'ning, with a silent pace,
Slowly moving in the west,
Shows an emblem of his grace,
Points to an eternal rest.

LXXXIV. *Perseverance.*

1 Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause his own;
The hope that's built upon his word
Can ne'er be overthrown.

2 Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm;
Your life is hid with Christ in God,*
Beyond the reach of harm.

3 Weak as you are, you shall not faint,
Or, fainting, shall not die;
Jesus, the strength of ev'ry saint,
Will aid you from on high.†

4 Though sometimes unperceiv'd by sense,
Faith sees him always near,
A Guide, a Glory, a Defence,
Then what have you to fear?

5 As surely as he overcame,
And triumph'd once for you,
So surely you, that love his name,
Shall triumph in him too.

LXXXV. *Salvation.*

1 Salvation! what a glorious plan,
How suited to our need!
The grace that raises fallen man
Is wonderful indeed!

2 'Twas wisdom form'd the vast design,
To ransom us when lost;
And love's unfathomable mine
Provided all the cost.

3 Strict justice, with approving look,
The holy cov'nant seal'd;
And truth and power undertook
The whole should be fulfill'd.

4 Truth, wisdom, justice, pow'r and love,
In all their glory shone,
When Jesus left the courts above,
And dy'd, to save his own.

5 Truth, wisdom, justice, pow'r and love,
Are equally display'd,
Now Jesus reigns enthron'd above,
Our Advocate and Head.

6 Now sin appears deserving death,
Most hateful and abhorr'd;
And yet the sinner lives by faith,
And dares approach the Lord.

LXXXVI. *Reigning Grace.*

1 Now may the Lord reveal his face,
And teach our stamm'ring tongues
To make his sov'reign reigning grace‡
The subject of our songs!
No sweeter subject can invite
A sinner's heart to sing,
Or more display the glorious right
Of our exalted King.

2 This subject fills the starry plains
With wonder, joy, and love;
And furnishes the noblest strains
For all the harps above;
While the redeem'd in praise combine
To grace, upon the throne,
Angels in solemn chorus join,
And make the theme their own.§

3 Grace reigns, to pardon crimson sins,
To melt the hardest hearts;
And from the work it once begins
It never more departs.‖
The world and Satan strive, in vain,
Against the chosen few;
Secur'd by grace's conqu'ring reign,
They all shall conquer too.¶

* Col. iii. 3. † Isaiah, xl. 29. ‡ Rom. v. 21. § Rev. v. 9—12. ‖ Phil. i. 6. ¶ Rom. viii. 3—39.

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4 Grace tills the soil, and sows the seeds,
Provides the sun and rain;
Till from the tender blade proceeds
The ripen'd harvest grain. [first;
'Twas grace that call'd our souls at
By grace thus far we're come;
And grace will help us through the worst,
And lead us safely home.

5 Lord, when this changing life is past,
If we may see thy face,
How shall we praise and love at last,
And sing the reign of grace!*
Yet let us aim, while here below,
Thy mercy to display;
And own, at least, the debt we owe,
Although we cannot pay.

LXXXVII. *Praise to the Redeemer.*

1 PREPARE a thankful song
To the Redeemer's name!
His praises should employ each tongue,
And ev'ry heart inflame!

2 He laid his glory by,
And dreadful pains endur'd,
That rebels, such as you and I,
From wrath might be secur'd.

3 Upon the cross he dy'd,
Our debt of sin to pay;
The blood and water from his side
Wash guilt and filth away.

4 And now he pleading stands,
For us, before the throne,
And answers all the law's demands
With what himself hath done.

5 He sees us willing slaves
To sin and Satan's pow'r; [saves
But, with an outstretch'd arm he
In his appointed hour.

6 The Holy Ghost he sends,
Our stubborn souls to move,
To make his enemies his friends,
And conquer them by love.

7 The love of sin departs,
The life of grace takes place,
Soon as his voice invites our hearts
To rise and seek his face.

8 The world and Satan rage,
But he their pow'r controls;
His wisdom, love, and truth, engage
Protection for our souls.

9 Though press'd, we will not yield,
But shall prevail at length;
For Jesus is our sun and shield,
Our righteousness and strength.

10 Assur'd that Christ, our King,
Will put our foes to flight,
We on the field of battle sing,
And triumph while we fight.

LXXXVIII. *Man by Nature, Grace, and Glory.*

1 LORD, what is man! extremes how wide,
In this mysterious nature join!
The flesh, to dust and worms ally'd,
The soul immortal and divine!

2 Divine at first, a holy flame
Kindled by the Almighty's breath;
Till, stain'd by sin, it soon became
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

3 But Jesus, Oh! amazing grace!
Assum'd our nature as his own,
Obey'd and suffer'd in our place,
Then took it with him to his throne.

4 Now what is man, when grace reveals
The virtue of a Saviour's blood?
Again a life divine he feels, [God.
Despises earth, and walks with

5 And what, in yonder realms above,
Is ransom'd man ordain'd to be?
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorn'd than he.

6 Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise;
While wond'ring angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.

*Psalm cxv. 1.

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VIII. SHORT HYMNS.—BEFORE SERMON.

HYMN LXXXIX.

CONFIRM the hope thy word allows,
Behold us waiting to be fed;
Bless the provisions of thy house,
And satisfy thy poor with bread:

Drawn by thine invitation, Lord,
Athirst and hungry, we are come;
Now, from the fulness of thy word,
Feast us, and send us, thankful, home.

HYMN XC.

1 Now, Lord, inspire the preacher's heart,
And teach his tongue to speak;
Food to the hungry soul impart,
And cordials to the weak.

2 Furnish us all with light and pow'rs
To walk in wisdom's ways:
So shall the benefit be ours,
And thou shalt have the praise.

HYMN XCI.

1 THY promise, Lord, and thy command,
Have brought us here to-day;
And now we humbly waiting stand
To hear what thou wilt say.*

2 Meet us, we pray, with words of peace;
And fill our hearts with love;
That from our follies we may cease,
And henceforth faithful prove.

HYMN XCII.

1 HUNGRY, and faint, and poor,
Behold us, Lord, again
Assembled at thy mercies' door,
Thy bounty to obtain.

2 Thy word invites us nigh,
Or we must starve indeed;
For we no money have, to buy,
No righteousness to plead.

3 The food our spirits want
Thy hand alone can give; [great
Oh! hear the pray'r of faith, and
That we may eat and live.

HYMN XCIII. Psalm cvi. 4, 5.

1 REMEMBER us, we pray thee, Lord,
With those who love thy gracious name;
And to our souls that good afford
Thy promise has prepar'd for them.

2 To us thy great salvation show,
Give us a taste of love divine;
That we thy people's joy may know,
And in their holy triumph join.

HYMN XCIV.

1 NOT to Sinai's dreadful blaze,
But to Zion's throne of grace,
By a way mark'd out with blood,
Sinners now approach to God.†

2 Not to hear the fiery law,
But, with humble joy, to draw
Water, by that well supply'd,
Jesus open'd when he dy'd.‡

3 Lord, there are no streams but thine
Can assuage a thirst like mine;
'Tis a thirst thyself didst give;
Let me, therefore, drink and live.

*Psalm lxxxv. 8. † Heb. xii. 18—24. ‡ Isa. xii. 3.

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HYMN XCV.

1 Often thy public means of grace,
Thy thirsty people's wat'ring place,
The archers have beset;*
Attack'd them in thy house of pray'r,
To prison dragg'd, or to the bar,
When thus together met.

2 But we from such assaults are freed,
Can pray, and sing, and hear, and read,
And meet, and part in peace:
May we our privileges prize;
In their improvement make us wise,
And bless us with increase.

3 Unless thy presence thou afford,
Unless thy blessing clothe the word,
In vain our liberty!
What would it profit to maintain
A name for life, should we remain
Formal and dead to thee?

AFTER SERMON.

HYMN XCVI. Deut. xxxiii. 26—29.

1 With Israel's God who can compare?
Or who like Israel happy are?
O people saved by the Lord,
He is thy shield and great reward!

2 Upheld by everlasting arms,
Thou art secur'd from foes and harms;
In vain their plots, and false their boasts,
Our refuge is the Lord of hosts.

HYMN XCVII. Habakkuk, iii. 17, 18.

Jesus is mine! I'm now prepar'd
To meet with what I thought most hard;
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow,
And comforts melt away like snow:
No blasted trees, or failing crops,
Can hinder my eternal hopes;
Though creatures change, the Lord's the same;
Then let me triumph in his name.

HYMN XCVIII

We seek a rest beyond the skies,
In everlasting day;
Through floods and flames the passage lies,
But Jesus guards the way:
The swelling flood, and raging flame,
Hear and obey his word;
Then let us triumph in his name,
Our Saviour is the Lord.

HYMN XCIX. Deut. xxxii. 9, 10.

1 The saints Immanuel's portion are,
Redeem'd by price, reclaim'd by pow'r;
His special choice and tender care
Owns them, and guards them ev'ry hour.

2 He finds them in a barren land,
Beset with sins, and fears, and foes;
He leads and guides them by his hand,
And bears them safe from all their foes.

HYMN C. Hebrews, xiii. 20—22.

1 Now may He who from the dead
Brought the Shepherd of the sheep,
Jesus Christ, our King and Head,
All our souls in safety keep!

2 May he teach us to fulfil
What is pleasing in his sight;
Perfect us in all his will,
And preserve us day and night!

3 To that dear Redeemer's praise,
Who the cov'nant seal'd with blood,
Let our hearts and voices raise,
Loud thanksgivings to our God.

* Judges, v. 11.

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HYMN CI. 2 Corinthians, xiii. 14.

May the grace of Christ our Saviour,
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favour,
Rest upon us from above!

Thus may we abide in union
With each other, and the Lord;
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford.

HYMN CII.

The peace which God alone reveals,
And by his word of grace imparts,
Which only the believer feels,
Direct, and keep, and cheer your hearts:*

And may the only Three in One,
The Father, Word, and Comforter,
Pour an abundant blessing down
On ev'ry soul assembled here!

HYMN CIII.

1 To thee our wants are known,
From thee are all our pow'rs;
Accept what is thine own,
And pardon what is ours: [ceive,
Our praises, Lord, and pray'rs re-
And to thy word a blessing give.

2 Oh, grant that each of us
Now met before thee here,
May meet together thus,
When thou and thine appear!
And follow thee to heav'n, our home:
E'en so, Amen, Lord Jesus, come.†

GLORIA PATRI.

HYMN CIV.

1 The Father we adore,
And everlasting Son,
The Spirit of his love and pow'r,
The glorious Three in One.

2 At the creation's birth
This song was sung on high,
Shall sound, through ev'ry age, on earth,
And through eternity.

HYMN CV.

1 Father of angels and of men,
Saviour, who hast us bought,
Spirit, by whom we're born again,
And sanctify'd, and taught!

2 Thy glory, holy Three in One,
Thy people's song shall be,
Long as the wheels of time shall run,
And to eternity.

HYMN CVI.

1 Glory to God, the Father's name,
To Jesus, who for sinners dy'd;
The Holy Spirit claims the same,
By whom our souls are sanctify'd.

2 Thy praise was sung, when time began,
By angels, through the starry spheres;
And shall, as now, be sung by man
Through vast eternity's long years.

HYMN CVII.

Ye saints on earth, ascribe, with heav'n's high host,
Glory and honour to the One in Three,
To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
As was, and is, and evermore shall be.

* Phil. iv. 7.

† Rev. xxii. 20.

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POEMS.

THE KITE;

OR,

PRIDE MUST HAVE A FALL.

My waking dreams are best conceal'd,
Much folly, little good, they yield:
But now and then I gain, when sleeping,
A friendly hint that's worth the keeping:
Lately I dream'd of one who cry'd,
"Beware of self, beware of pride;
"When you are prone to build a Babel,
"Recall to mind this little fable."

ONCE on a time a paper kite
Was mounted to a wondrous height,
Where, giddy with its elevation,
It thus express'd self-admiration: [ple
"See how yon crowds of gazing peo-
"Admire my flight above the steeple;
"How would they wonder if they knew
"All that a kite like me can do!
"Were I but free, I'd take a flight,
"And pierce the clouds beyond their sight;
"But, ah! like a poor pris'ner bound,
"My string confines me near the ground,
"I'd brave the eagle's tow'ring wing,
"Might I but fly without a string."
It tugg'd and pull'd, while thus it spoke,
To break the string—at last it broke.
Depriv'd at once of all its stay,
In vain it try'd to soar away;
Unable its own weight to bear,
It flutter'd downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The winds soon plung'd it in the tide.
Ah! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,
How could'st thou fly without a string?
My heart reply'd, "O Lord, I see
"How much this kite resembles me!
"Forgetful that by thee I stand,
"Impatient of thy ruling hand;
"How oft I've wish'd to break the lines
"Thy wisdom for my lot assigns!
"How oft indulg'd a vain desire
"For something more, or something high'r!
"And, but for grace and love divine,
"A fall thus dreadful had been mine."

A Thought on the Sea Shore.

1 IN ev'ry object here I see
Something, O Lord, that leads to thee.
Firm as the rocks thy promise stands,
Thy mercies countless as the sands,
Thy love a sea immensely wide,
Thy grace an ever-flowing tide.

2 In ev'ry object here I see
Something, my heart, that points to thee.
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,
Unfruitful as the barren sand,
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,
And like the tides, inconstant motion.

The Spider and Toad.

SOME author, (no great matter who,
Provided what he says be true,)
Relates he saw, with hostile rage
A spider and a toad engage;
For though with poison both are stor'd,
Each by the other is abhorr'd,
It seems, as if their common venom
Provok'd an enmity between 'em.
Implacable, malicious, cruel,
Like modern hero in a duel,
The spider darted on his foe,
Infixing death at ev'ry blow.

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The toad, by ready instinct taught,
An antidote, when wounded, sought
From the herb Plantane, growing near,
Well known to toads its virtues rare,
The spider's poison to repel;
It cropp'd the leaf, and soon was well.
This remedy it often try'd,
And all the spider's rage defy'd.
The person who the contest view'd,
While yet the battle doubtful stood,
Remov'd the healing plant away—
And thus the spider gain'd the day:
For when the toad return'd once more
Wounded, as it had done before,
To seek relief, and found it not,
It swell'd, and dy'd upon the spot.

In ev'ry circumstance but one,
(Could that hold too, I were undone,)
No glass can represent my face
More justly than this tale my case.
The toad's an emblem of my heart,
And Satan acts the spider's part.
Envenom'd by his poison, I
Am often at the point to die;
But he who hung upon the tree,
From guilt and wo to set me free,
Is like the Plantane leaf to me.
To him my wounded soul repairs,
He knows my pain, and hears my pray'rs;
From him I virtue draw, by faith,
Which saves me from the jaws of death:
From him fresh life and strength I gain,
And Satan spends his rage in vain.
No secret arts or open force
Can rob me of this sure resource;
Though banish'd to some distant land,
My med'cine would be still at hand;
Though foolish men its worth deny,
Experience gives them all the lie;
Though Deists and Socinians join,
Jesus still lives, and still is mine.
'Tis here the happy diff'rence lies,
My Saviour reigns above the skies,
Yet to my soul is always near,
For he is God, and ev'ry where.
His blood a sov'reign balm is found
For ev'ry grief, and ev'ry wound;
And sooner all the hills shall flee,
And hide themselves beneath the sea;
Or ocean, starting from its bed, [head;
Rush o'er the cloud-topt mountain's
The sun exhausted of its light,
Become the source of endless night;
And ruin spread from pole to pole;
Than Jesus fail the tempted soul.

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A

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